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LETTERS FROM SOLITUDE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

FILSON YOUNG

LONDON
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To my Father

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IRELAND

I

A SOLITARY CURE

LIKE many of my generation, I have lost the art of writing letters, and with it, I am sure, a certain fulness of life that accompanies the communication of one's thoughts to a friend at a distance. There are certain things, often trivial but nearly always interesting, that can only be written in letters; one cannot make articles or poems or books out of them—at least I cannot; and sometimes I find that they are the only things I want to say. And as the first quality of a letter is that it is addressed to some one in particular, and not to every one in general; that one is sure of a sympathetic interest and understanding at the receiving end; so I am going to write these letters to four people. Sometimes I shall be speaking to one, sometimes to another; but the one who is addressed will always know. They are all women; two of them are old and two fairly young; but as their ages in the aggregate amount to more than two hundred years, I shall not be accused of frivolity. But why publish them, you

say ? Alas, it is my desolate habit not to be able to write otherwise than for publication. I could not write an article or a book on the chance of its being published and read ; and if I were to write to my four friends privately my letters would be scrappy ones, and would tell them nothing. It is not a pretty trait, that ; I do not excuse it ; perhaps it is because I have always made my living by writing, and associate all writing with labour. Another explanation, and certainly a more agreeable one, is that I am saddled with the desire to create, or at least to express something. I have always had it and, as one of you well knows who watched me through that time, for years expressed myself in music ; but as my music was seldom published or played, I forsook music for a means of expression in which I have had more success. Some people are like human gramophone-disks, always ready to experience something, and then anxious to tell the world about it. If they are pleased or annoyed, made happy or hurt, their first instinct is to give expression to their sensations. It is an instinct which one learns with years to hold in check ; things ripen of themselves within one, and, sweet or bitter, come to fruit in their own good time. In the meantime this news from nowhere will at any rate interest the four friends to whom it is addressed, and may afford some innocent

pastime for those who like reading other people's letters.

And first let me tell you why I am here, at the western extremity of Ireland, miles and miles from anything in the shape of a village, where, unless I fish for trout, there is nothing for me to do and no one for me to speak to. A certain amount of solitude is necessary to the soul's health, but one too easily loses the art of being alone; I lose it very quickly. The life of any metropolis soon engenders in me a kind of panic terror of being bored, which means that in this state of disease one is bored if one is alone. So every minute is filled up, wisely or unwisely.

Nightly, as one unfolds one's dinner napkin, one screws oneself up to concert pitch, and takes a part in the busy orchestra; and having played till one is tired, has no inclination for a solitary performance. This is a thoroughly unhealthy state of affairs—a fact which was made painfully apparent to me by the horror and boredom with which at first I viewed my noble and desolate surroundings. I felt like a street-arab set to play in an empty field. So I mean to stay here until I have learned once more to be alone. I have to do it constantly, and have tried it in many places; and as some people go to a spring every year to take a cure for some bodily ailment, so I find that it is good for me to take this cure of

solitude until I have learned not to shun my own thoughts, and not to find every kind of life but the set scenes of society fatiguing. I feel them fatiguing enough, God knows, and pretend to despise them; but they are the easiest kind of life. It is harder to think one's own thoughts than to play with the thoughts of others.

It is not so easy to find a solitude where life is tolerable. I know Ireland very well, but not from the hotel point of view, and there are many Irish hotels, alas! where even one's narrow bed may not be solitude. I wanted air that would brace and not enervate, a freedom from tennis-players and golf-talkers, simple food and clean lodging, a room to work in and the life of men and women around me to observe, if not to take part in. Well, I went to one hotel on the north-east coast, and was told it was just the thing. It took half a day to get there; I arrived late in the afternoon and fled the next morning; and the hours I spent there seemed like years of my life. The place was not a real place, but the fond dream and invention of a railway company. It lay at the end of a great spit of arable land, and consisted of a railway station, a wharf constructed to contain one passenger steamer, two streets of cottages built by the company for their employees, an electric generating station (for the hotel), a laundry (for the hotel and steamers), and a golf

links. The hotel lawn was fenced by sleepers, like a station approach, and there were only two ways of getting out of the hotel. One led directly to an opening in the quay wall, so that if the steamer was not there to catch you you fell into the water, and the other led into the railway station. The road from the station led to the golf-links. I hated golf; I could not go and look at a steamer without taking a ticket for England, for it was jealously screened from view by the hotel wall; the laundry was not working, there was a notice saying 'No Admittance' to the electric light works, so I went back to the hotel and dined in extreme misery, ashamed of my silence amid the loud talk of what was perhaps the most abandoned company of golfers I have ever seen. Bright and early next morning I went out by the railway door and returned to Dublin, and took fresh counsel; and as a result here I am at the opposite extremity of Ireland, far from railways and hotels, and farther still from golf.

None of you knows Connemara, so I must try and give you some picture of my surroundings, though I will not attempt to describe the grandeur and desolation of this great barren glacial country, with its magnificent mountain range in the centre, and interminable vistas of rocky bog-land broken by a thousand in-reaching arms of the sea. But this sea is not like any sea that you know; no

traffic comes or goes upon it; hardly a fisherman fishes in its teeming waters; it is far from the open Atlantic, shallow, and strewn with half-tide rocks covered with golden seaweed. The cabins along its shores are so tiny and so scattered that only an accustomed eye would discover their existence; life everywhere is sad and silent, and the attempts at cultivating some little patch among the rocks, and raising a crop of oats or potatoes, are miserable and heartbreaking. All the hills, all the plains that you can see are a sad green dotted with grey; there is as much grey as green; the grey is rock, and the green is the bitter useless grass that grows on the bog. Here and there are little chocolate mounds where the turf has been cut and stacked for fuel. One winding white road leads to the railway fourteen miles away. The railway will take you to Galway in two hours; from Galway to Dublin is three or four more hours; from Dublin to Holyhead is eighty miles, and from Holyhead to the nearest of you is a long way.

You see the first effect of solitude—to send one's thoughts out, as Noah's dove went out, to find some sign of a place where they may rest. I will tell you presently something of how life goes on here; but now the mountains are taking on their evening colour—the mauve behind the black, the grey behind the mauve, and the farthest of all,

behind the grey, a mere shadow wavering in the sky. The sun is setting, and the bell from the little convent is ringing for Compline. I will not go to Compline, but I will alter a word of the salutation with which it is begun, and say to each of you, ' Pray, madam, a blessing.'

II

IN CONNEMARA

THE day I came here was a day of deluge and drifting mists and squalls, and my drive from the station was a two hours' submersion. There was nothing to be seen but the road and a bit of the bog on each side; indeed it was at times impossible to hold up one's eyelids under the weight of wind and water that pressed against them. The inn stands bleakly at the head of a bay far away from the open sea; it looked very drear and isolated, but I was glad to get under the shelter of a roof. My solitude began at once; my fellow-guests, all fishermen, were out on their various stands, lake and river, and I had the dingy coffee-room to myself for lunch. After that, the deluge continuing, there was nothing for it but to unpack my belongings and settle down for an afternoon indoors. I had brought some books with me—Swinburne, Davidson's last poems, Morris's *History of Ireland*, *Henry Esmond* and a few others—among them George Moore's rewritten *Sister Teresa*, which he had given me in Dublin. I nibbled at several of

them, and then finally settled down to *Sister Teresa*, which I finished before the day was done. I was disappointed in this new version—or rather new book on the same subject, for it is an entirely new book ; and though I regard George Moore as a great writer and an artist, this book only deepens my conviction that people should never re-write their books or tell their stories a second time. I think it is not nearly so good as the old *Sister Teresa*, although it is written with a very masterly technique. It is almost entirely in dialogue, there is hardly a page of description, and that in itself is a very considerable achievement. But I had been talking to Moore about the later books of Henry James, and had been pleased with his remark that reading them was (for him) like eating cork—you chewed and chewed and chewed, but it was savourless ; no nourishment came of it. Well, I did not exactly find *Sister Teresa* like cork, but I did find a flatness and monotony in the story. George Moore is a master of the art of telling a story, but this is a story without symmetry and relief, and the great wedge in the middle about Egypt and hawking in the desert seems to be dragged in so laboriously that it has little interest. It is merely a pause in the interminable chatter of the convent and the helpless struggles of Owen Asher to keep Evelyn. I dislike Asher as much as ever I did, and begin to

lose interest in Evelyn; but I suppose Moore means her to become less interesting as the church tightens its grip upon her; her little burst of life is over; she is beginning the long death of the convent. Of course, there are many good things in the book, and many things delightfully characteristic of George Moore and his style. Here is one:

'We use words, but words mean so little. What do we mean when we speak about Nature? Where does Nature begin? Where does she end? And God? We talk of God, and we do not know whether He eats or sleeps, whether He wears clothes or goes naked; Moses saw His hinder parts, and He used to be jealous and revengeful; but as man grows merciful, God grows merciful with him—we make Him to our own likeness, and spend a great deal of money in the making.

'Yes, God is a great expense, but government would be impossible without Him.'

Perhaps I read the book a little too fast to do it justice, and gave myself mental indigestion. I shall read it again presently to make sure that I do not like it. There is no writer like George Moore, and one cannot afford to be wrong about him.

In the evening the anglers came back very wet, and sat round the dinner-table talking of the day's sport. I confess that I find the talk of fishermen less tedious than any other kind of sporting 'shop.' For one thing it is a solitary occupation, and

acquires a certain dignity from that circumstance, for a man who can be cheerfully silent and alone all day is never a fool, and is often capable of genuine thought. They were the usual types—a colonel or so, a doctor, a snug elderly gentleman who lived contented on what he had, and sought fishing in this place and that, and one or two nondescripts who seemed to have no conscious life away from their rods and flies. They sat there munching away and exaggerating the difficulties and surprises of their failures, and putting down their successes to an extraordinary and sudden access of skill on their part, in spite of something like perversion on the part of the fish, as is the manner of all sportsmen. Anyhow the talk passed the short, windy evening; and to-morrow, as Montaigne said, is always 'a new day.'

And this to-morrow was really a new day. The sun shone, the sky was cloudless, the air very hot and still. It was no weather for anglers, but it was good enough for me, and I walked out along the road that runs beside the shore. In this glacier land, you must remember, there is no variety of colour except what the light and distance give. On one side of the road the land slopes, a tumble of scrub and stones, upwards to the low, olive-green hills of the shore; beyond them rise greater hills, deeper in colour; beyond them the mountains, peak after peak of mauve and grey;

beyond them again the empty blue sky. And on the other side of the road lie great rocks, with patches of short grass on them where perhaps a little black cow is feeding; and then the stones of the beach, the tawny gold of the seaweed, and the untroubled blue of the sea. In these sheltered bays, far away from the unrest of that Atlantic of which their waters are a part, the tides seem to creep in and out most stealthily. At low water the blue level is broken by hundreds and hundreds of island rocks and stones, all covered by the wet golden weed; as the tide rises the weed moves and lifts, becomes smaller in area, becomes merely a patch of purple under the blue, vanishes altogether, until a floor of unbroken water stretches from shore to shore, and washes gently against the grey rocks. It is the only sound—this still small voice of the deep-throated ocean far away, telling you that the tide is about to turn again.

Hour after hour, as you sit or lie there in the heather, this silence of an empty land sinks deeper and deeper into your spirit. Such sounds as there are only serve to reveal the silence—now the cry of a seagull, now the drone of a bee, now the splash of a rising fish, and rarely, very rarely, the soft thud of bare feet on the road as some one passes by. And if you turn from the world we call inanimate to look for life and movement in the world of men and women, the silence and

stagnation will only seem the deeper. The few peasants you see, those who are not gathering seaweed on the rocks for kelp-burning, seem to be waiting for something that never comes. Yesterday there was talk of a Government inspector coming in the afternoon—something to do with old-age pensions—and hour by hour, from early morning, the people came in from the mountains and islands and sat down by the roadside—not speaking, barely moving, not eating or drinking, but just waiting. Most of them were old and bent; many, young or old, were beautiful of face and feature, their deep, melancholy grey eyes seeming to look out into another world; and alas! it is to another world that most of them turn their thoughts and hopes. For these are the people who really look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, and who look for little else. Of what moment, then, a few hours by the roadside, a few years of bitter existence on these stony hills, a few burnings by the sun and drenchings by the rain, a few toils, a few tears, a little hunger and a little sorrow? It is all of very little account to them, and so they lose in the fight against wild nature which is the peasant's unending crusade; and the gorse and the heather and the bramble, that have neither heaven to lose nor soul to save, creep in upon the little fields and surprise the enemy in his spiritual sleep.

Towards evening I climbed a hill and looked abroad over the country of Connemara, as far as Joyce's Country and Jar Connaught to the east, and as far as the sea to the north and west and south. Water everywhere! Down at the sea-level one could see only hills; up on the hills one can see little besides water. From the Killaries to Galway Bay the sea runs inland in every direction, its bays formed like trees, branching and branching into smaller bays and inlets. And among the hills, strung like turquoise necklaces about their throats, lay the lakes—not ten nor twenty, but hundreds. And over all the evening sun was shedding its soft light—especially on one little round hill, ruggedly crowned, the sides of it ablaze with the great-belled Connemara heather, that reminded me strongly of St. Michael's Mount, and of that other western land where also there are solitudes and wide seas; so that some verses in Davidson's last volume came into my head, and rang in it until I was home again among the discontented fishermen. I will put them down here, so that there may be at least one pleasant page in my letter:

'St. Michael's Mount, the tidal isle,
In May with daffodils and lilies
Is kirtled gorgeously awhile
As ne'er another English hill is:
About the precipices cling
The rich renascene robes of Spring.

Her gold and silver, nature's gifts,
The prodigal with both hands showers:
O not in patches, not in drifts
But round and round, a mount of flowers—
Of lilies and of daffodils,
The envy of all other hills.

And on the lofty summit looms
The castle: none could build or plan it.
The foursquare foliage springs and blooms,
The piled elaborate flower of granite,
That not the sun can wither; no,
Nor any tempest overthrow.'

I wonder if this interests you, since it is merely a record of some commonplace doings of a lonely person who in his secret soul hates being alone. And yet if my letters are dull, it is because I have consciously made a selection from among my commonplace doings, and not put down everything. If I had told all—what I had to eat, the serious difficulties about the chairs, what I really felt when the post came and there was nothing for me, how the waiter was drunken and the waitress imbecile, how there is a little lawn in front of the hotel on which now a drove of youug turkeys feed, now a squadron of ducks, now a mob of chickens, but never all three together—would that be interesting? But I will spare you my reflections on turkey-life. In my next letter you shall have a real piece of local human drama.

III

A MOUNTAIN DRAMA

ON a recent afternoon a little party straggled along a Connemara road, and then struck into the mountains. It consisted of, first, two constables, then a peasant woman, then another constable and the sergeant, then the local magistrate who is also the local hotelkeeper, his son and clerk, the doctor and myself. The peasant woman was in custody for having that morning struck her mother-in-law, an old woman nearly eighty years of age, over the head with a pair of tongs; and as the old woman was thought to be dying, the magistrate was going to take her depositions. So we climbed the mountains, no formality being observed, the prisoner walking a quarter of a mile away from her warders, and all of us intent upon our footing as we strode or leaped from stone to stone, or skirted a brown spongy patch of bog. Then we came to the 'village'—four cabins hanging on the mountain side, each no bigger than the inside of a motor-omnibus, and each the centre of a tiny cultivated

patch of land, where poor little fragments of crops feebly waved among the rocks. No road or path —just these four cabins and their little plots looking down over the lake-studded plain that lies between these southern hills and the great soaring inland mountains.

We stooped and went into the cabin in which the persons of the drama had their home. In a corner by the peat fire the poor old victim lay groaning on a heap of rags on the earth floor. Her son, a weak, complaining creature, sat beside her holding her hand. The prisoner, his wife—a patient intelligent woman with a face of strength and suffering—sat on a box opposite to them. No greetings were exchanged. Her two children—beautiful little creatures with dark hair and great violet eyes—sat solemnly and speechlessly together on a tiny bench. The rest of us were crowded somehow into the bare, clean little hut, which was furnished only with a dresser, two chairs, a box and a bench. A few chickens cheeped gently among our feet, and on a bed of heather at the far end of the room the family cow rustled and sighed. We kept both doors open for light and air, and while the doctor was making his examination I learned the facts.

It was the familiar situation of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, contracted here into the space of a few square yards. Ten years ago this

old woman's son, John let us call him, married this pretty Margaret from another country. She was an heiress, and brought him a dowry of fifty pounds. Old Mary, the mother, resented her coming into the house; old as she was, she still intended to be mistress; but until the fifty pounds was spent they all lived together; the man gave up all attempts at work, and loafed and drank and bullied the wife on whose money he was living. Then—after who knows what shame and suffering in body and mind ?—she ran away alone to America, and there lived and worked for two years, regularly sending home money to husband and children—for she had left the two little ones behind her in her flight. She bore a third child soon after she left home; and I suppose the pull of the other children drew her back again, for she returned last winter. Since then there had been continual squabbles and fightings; she had twice to seek the protection of the police from her husband; and on the morning of the tragedy things came to a climax. She was baking a cake of bread for the children's breakfast; the old woman, who did not want bread herself and could not bear that any one else should have it, threw the cake into the fire. The daughter-in-law turned on her and struck at her with the tongs; they came down on her head, cutting it badly; the son struck at his wife and caught his mother

as she fell. The police were sent for, and the prisoner was marched off four miles to the barracks, whence she had now been marched back, presently to be marched to the barracks again—twelve miles' walking—driven five miles in a car to the station, and taken by train to Galway Jail—another two hours' journey: and all day without food. It was indeed a singular circumstance that none of the persons in the drama had eaten anything all that day. The old woman, who had lost a lot of blood and was now very low, was sinking from exhaustion; the son had not made any attempt to feed her or himself. I asked if there was any milk in the house. 'Ah, no, your honour; it 's too poor I am to have any milk,' he whined; but the prisoner said calmly, 'There 's some in that cup on the dresser, sir.' 'Have you an egg?' I asked him. 'Ah, niver a one, sir, at all' I looked at the prisoner. 'You 'll find one under the basin, sir.' We beat up the egg in some milk for the old woman, who took a little very reluctantly; and later, when I asked the son if she had finished it, he said she had. 'Get up and let me see what you 're hiding there.' He rose and disclosed the mug, still half full. 'Ah, and it 's ill in meself I am, your honour, and after needing something to put strength in me.' It was only by reference to old-age pensions, wrapped up in an assumption of his love of his mother,

that one was able to convince him of the importance of keeping her alive.

The doctor's report being unfavourable, the depositions were taken, much confusion being caused by the ill-put questions of the sergeant. It was something like this—the old woman answering in mournful, wailing, but beautiful broken tones :

SERGEANT. 'How were you feeling in yourself this morning, Mary?'

MARY. 'Oh, it was wake, wake, I was.'

SERGEANT. 'But were ye any waker than usual?' (*Question repeated.*)

MARY. 'It 's wake this long time I 've been.'

CLERK (*reading*). 'I, Mary Manisty, got up early this morning, being in my usual health——'

SERGEANT. 'Now, tell us what happened. Come on, now; what happened next?'

MARY. That woman shtruck at me with the tongs, and I 'd a been kilt only for me son, and——'

PRISONER (*rapidly*). 'Sure I went to put a cake on the fire for the children, and I never wished the old woman any harm, and me goin' in fear of me life of that man ever since I came home, and had to run out of the bed from him last night, an' I just gave her a tip with the tongs, an' I didn't mean to hurt her at all.'

SERGEANT. 'Whisht, woman. You 'll be able to tell your story in court. (*Producing the tongs.*) 'Is this the tongs she shtruck ye with, Mary?'

MARY (*whimpering*). 'Sure it is, your honour, and she 'd a kilt me——'

SERGEANT. 'Where did she shtrike ye?'

MARY (*undoing her bandages*). 'Here, your honour,

and I niver wanted her in the house at all, and it's me own house me husband left me——'

SERGEANT. 'What part of the tongs did she shtrike with?'

PRISONER (*pointing*). 'With that part, sir.'

SERGEANT. 'Whisht, woman, now. (*To* MARY.) 'Did she shtrike you with the shoulder of the tongs?'

MARY (*crying*). 'On me head.'

SERGEANT. 'But was it with the shoulder of the tongs she hit ye?'

MARY. 'It was, long life to your honour.'

CLERK (*reading*). 'Margaret Manisty, my daughter-in-law, whom I now see, then struck me on the shoulder with the head of the tongs' (*produced*)——

(*Together*)

DOCTOR. 'No, on the head.'
SERGEANT. 'On the head with the shoulder of it.'
PRISONER. 'It was on the head I shtruck her.'
MAGISTRATE. With the shoulder, on the head of her, wasn't it, Mary?'
STRANGER. 'The shoulder of the tongs, not——'
JOHN. 'Ay, and the wall was all shpattered with blood.'
CONSTABLE. 'Sure, it wasn't the head of the tongs at all.'

CLERK (*correcting*). 'On the head with the shoulder,' etc.

And so on. The dreary little tragedy was reconstructed step by step, the rich, quavering wail of the old woman with the great grey eyes and wrinkled face answering the briefer speech of the men, and the sweet quiet tones of the younger woman. Through the open doorway, golden in the dying sunlight, lay all of the world that some

of them had ever seen—the plain and the mountains and the far-away shining of the sea. Once the baby, who was in the adjoining room, began to whimper, its small voice rising louder in an appeal for attention. Its mother made an instinctive movement towards the sound, but the constable's detaining hand was on her arm and she sat back again, listening to the small voice that none responded to. When the end came, and it was time for the prisoner to start on her long journey to Galway (whence she might possibly never return), she kissed the two little ones tearlessly, and sent the five-year-old girl, a baby herself, in to mind the infant and take up the parent's burden. To her husband or the old woman she spoke no word and made no sign, and marched stoically out with the constable into the golden evening, to be dealt with as the Fates should decree.

It was obvious that the old woman would die from sheer exhaustion if she were not fed ; though the doctor, hardened by long experience, merely told them to ' mind and feed her up,' and departed with the rest of us. A bottle of port, carefully disguised and marked ' Medicine ; a tablespoonful after food,' was made ready at the hotel when I got back ; the son and several neighbours had promised that some one would come for it in the evening ; but no one took the trouble to come,

and I went to bed with sad misgivings as to the future of the daughter-in-law and her children if the worst should come to pass.

The third act of the drama took place the next day, which was Sunday. I got a large bottle filled with broth, and with that in one hand and the port in the other started on the four-mile walk to the cabin. It was very hot, and once off the road on the boggy mountains the horse-flies attacked me, and, as both my hands were occupied, bit busily on my unprotected flesh. Whenever I sat down to rest and do battle with them, I was fortified by a vision of the dying old woman, and the many lives that might depend on my errand, and so arrived, physically demoralised but mentally exalted, at the door of the hut. It was barricaded; and only after considerable parley was it opened, and I and my burden admitted. I expected to find that death had come before me; but on the contrary, the old woman was sitting up in her corner looking very bright and brisk, the son sitting beside her in the same attitude as yesterday, and a neighbour, who opened the door to me, sitting at talk with them. Amazing vitality! The eighty-year-old victim who the morning before had lost half a pint of blood at least, and whom we found in a sinking condition, was apparently on the mend, although she had taken nothing but some stewed tea in the

meantime. I was made welcome and received with all honour; but not a drop of my broth or port would the patient touch. When it was put to her lips she sank back and shook her head. This was too much; I remembered the flies, and embarked on cajolery. Here was I, I said, after walking eight miles to bring her something to make her well; would she do something to please me?

'Ay, an' that I would, your honour!'

Then would she take some of the nice broth—just to please me?

'I would indeed your honour; and' (loudly) 'if it was poison itself I'd take it.' And with perfect docility she drank down the broth.

But the tragedy was over. She was not going to die; in that case (the magistrate had promised) the prisoner would be released in a few days; and, for good or ill, they would all be together again. So the only thing left was to offer a few words of advice as to the desirability of living and letting live, and so forth. Had they missed her since she had gone? Yes, and indeed they had missed her; missed (although they had not known it) the calm practical strength of her presence, and consciously missed the order and energy she had brought into the feckless little household. Then, if they missed her for a day, how would it be if she never came back for ten

years? That was a fortunate shot, which went well home. They promised readily enough, if she came back, to welcome her and to be kind and not to cross her. The old woman followed me about the room with her great grey eyes, and when I was leaving, kissed my hand and blessed me very prettily; and her beautiful resonant salutation of 'Long life to your honour!' followed me out into the hot sunshine.

I confess I was despondent enough about the effect of my advice, although I could not but be happy at their warm recognition of my friendly intention. More than the bottles and the advice, the eight mile walk I had taken would do them good; and I had all the conventional sensations of bringing away from my mission much more than I had taken to it. Yet, to my great surprise, I heard later that the commonplace advice had produced a wonderful effect, simply because it came from a stranger who could not be suspected of 'taking sides'; and that they had acted on it as they would not have acted on the advice of people well known to them and important in their lives. . . .

So you see that even in these solitudes one's thread gets caught up and tangled with other threads; for it is often when one is most lonely that one is least alone.

IV

INISHMUSKERRY

THIS letter is all about an island—a little island, as islands must be if one is to love them and make them one's own. It is called Inishmuskerry, and lies about a mile beyond the mouth of one of these long Connemara bays; it faces south-west to the open Atlantic, and the sea horizon is only broken by the three swelling curves of the Aran Islands, and the white finger of their lighthouse. Your first sight of it is only a low jagged line of rock, less than a quarter of a mile long, with the sea breaking white at one end; but as you approach you see the green of grass above the rock, and a gleam of white where there is a sandy bay. You come nearer, and some of the black masses of rock detach themselves, and show you that the island is even smaller than you thought it; nearer still, and the little coast-line resolves itself into points and bays, until at last, rounding a steep rocky foreland where three or four cormorants are nearly always sitting, you sail up a calm little sound with the

black detached wall of barrier rocks on one hand and a pearly white strand on the other. A few yards away, on the other side of those low rocks, the seas are breaking and bursting into snow and thunder; here are absolute calm and stillness, the shallow green waters sleeping in the sunshine and revealing the garden of sea-plants that hardly stirs beneath you.

You bring your boat alongside a flat rock, make her fast and land. The island is uninhabited, or at least so they had told you; but you find that it is not so, for on your arrival clouds of black-headed terns get up from the rocks and begin to swoop and scream over your head; and as long as you remain there they will keep you under observation, and very indignantly talk about you, up there in their sunny world of wings. But you soon forgot their voices, which, like the continuous roar of the surf about you, become as undisturbing as the silence, and you are free to enjoy your possession of the island; for everything that we love and enjoy becomes our very own, and the extent of our possession is only the extent of our love.

And how shall I begin to tell you of the charms of Inishmuskerry? I will keep to the shore first, as I always do when I visit it. For those who like to walk into the sea on a sparkling white carpet and through clear emerald water, there is no place

in the world for bathing equal to the white strand on Inishmuskerry. It is steep; you are in deep water in a moment; it is calm, but round by the rocks you can swim into all the surf you want. And then, when you have reluctantly left the water, and gone back to it again half a dozen times, you can lie naked on the hot sand and watch the terns and gulls swooping over you, and let the sun turn the salt on your body to stinging crystals, and be lulled by songs of Halcyone and Ceyx into a sleep that is half a dream, and a dream that is deeper than any sleep. And then when you have dreamed a little you may rise and eat, for food eaten in such a place has a savour of its own; and as landing on islands is one of the great joys of sailing on the sea, so eating when you land is one of the minor ways of enjoying an island.

And not until you have eaten and rested do you leave your little beach and strike across the grass that carpets the middle of the island. It is at the highest point only some twenty feet above sea-level, but it rolls about in little plains and valleys, and, small as it is (a walk of five minutes will take you from one extremity to the other), it contains almost every variety of pleasant feature. There is a spring, and a little pond of wild lilies; the pasture is deep and rich, and, in those barren parts, precious on that account; some one pays four-and-twenty pounds a year for Inishmuskerry,

and his cattle come and grow sleek here. There is a little hut on it where the herd may spend a night. At the seaward end there is a great pile of stones that once supported a flagstaff, and two hundred years ago a man used to live here and watch other flagstaffs on other islands and points, so that when a foreign ship was sighted its coming might be signalled from one flagstaff to another, and the inhabitants ashore warned. For Inishmuskerry has not always been a mere habitation of seabirds and cattle. Tiny as it is, the drama of life has been enacted on its small stage, and love and strife, birth and death, played their parts here. If you look closely at the turf you will see the traces of furrows, parallel, and showing the hand of man ; for in the old days the kelp-burners had a few huts here, and tilled each of them a patch of earth to grow the potatoes on which they lived.

And there are other and smaller furrows, the graves of little children ; the signalman had three children who, dying on the island, sleep here undisturbed through the centuries. They were, I am sure, the real island people, for Inishmuskerry is too small for men or women to live contented on it ; they would always be looking across at the shore, and wondering what the people there were doing and saying. But to the children the shore must have been a mere world of fable ; this was

the real world for them, with slippery rocks and roaring surges for perils and all the wild flowers of spring and summer for joys; with grey misty days for melancholy, and bright sunshine and shouting winds for gladness. These few yards of grass and rock were all their world; long, long ago they lived and played and died here—little lives and deaths, suitable for a little island like this. . . . I had visited Inishmuskerry several times before I knew of these graves or heard their history; but from the first I had been aware, in spite of the screaming gulls and the watchful cormorants and the ancient roaring sea, of a strange atmosphere of innocence and peace; and if matter has any memory, or spirit any persistence, it should not in this country of dreams and fables be hard to believe that those small innocent spirits, unheard and unseen, still inhabit the island and keep it sweet with the haunting presence of youth.

And now that the children are dead the real island people are the terns and the puffins and the dark, satanic cormorants that perch in rows on the rocks and watch the sea with unwinking eyes. The terns especially have an air of proprietorship, and deeply resent the intrusion of a stranger. Just now they have special reason to do so, for this is their breeding-place, and you have to walk warily over the grass lest you hurt

one of the young birds that are lying there, still in the elementary stage of their education—soft, fluffy little birds, very tame and easily picked up, and not at all resentful of a caressing hand. The gulls are always talking, always in a fuss; the cormorants never. They sit and sit by the hour, silent and motionless on a range of rock, and then with a flap of black wings launch themselves out like projectiles over the sea and are gone from sight. There is a heron, too, a very shy heron; there is a little drove of kittiwakes, and a wild bee that came over in my boat one day, and was very much astonished at the aridity of planks and ropes, and finally sat down on a withered pansy that was in the buttonhole of a coat lying on the floor, and sulked there until we made the island. Now she is glad, for on Inishmuskerry there are many kinds of wild flowers flourishing among the grasses, as well as the sea-holly, thrift and sea-pansy that grow in the sand of the shore; and when I am walking there I often hear the swift drone of her wings as she flies about on her fragrant business.

Have I wearied you with my island? If I have, the fault is mine, and not Inishmuskerry's; you would never tire of it if you knew it; there are such flowers in its field, such shells on its shore as would enchant you through many a long summer's day. You may even have your choice

of climates there; you may sit on the south-western rocks, with the fresh wind and roaring surf about you, or lie in the sandy hollows amid the shy and delicate perfumes of wild flowers. Do you remember a certain great sea-wind at night that filled the darkness with the brushing of sable wings; a wind of infinite weight and infinite softness, that wrapped all the world in black velvet? Well, I found it again on Inishmuskerry the other day, when the white clouds were charioting northwards over a deep sky, and sun and wind and sea were all jousting together. This wind was heavy and soft, but instead of being dressed in black velvet it wore the colour of deepest blue, and its wrapping had not the thickness of velvet but the softness of silk; it brought me again the message of the velvet wind. And although Inishmuskerry has its melancholy, misty moods, I will not go to it then, for I would see it always as I know it now—a place so redolent of happiness that even if you went there unhappy, you would find hope growing among its asphodels and heather.

I have told you so much about this island because I think such places are among the best and most beautiful things in one's life. You cannot lose them, they cannot fail or betray you, they are your very own always. From them you may often get a calm Pisgah-view, and see, beyond

dim and foamy horizons, the sunshine touching the shores of some promised land. And although it is one thing to see the land, and quite another thing to reach it, it is always something to have seen it with your eyes, and to know that it is there; even if you go down off the very shores of your island, and see and are seen no more.

V

THE END OF THE CURE

YOU will notice that I soon moved from my first headquarters in Connemara, and found others, no less solitary, but far more congenial. It was not until I had come some ten miles westward, nearer still to the salt wilderness of the Atlantic, that I realised that the melancholy of that first halting-place was not, as I had thought, due to some mood of my own, but was really inherent in the place. Human existence was a depressing business for every one there; here, ten miles away, it is quite different. The land is as stony and barren as ever, and the landscape the same sonata of bog, mountain and sea; but here people's faces are brighter, happier, more hopeful; they smile here continually, and do not complain of poverty. Why? Because this part of Ireland is perhaps one of the best examples of what the reconstructive efforts of the various organisations for the betterment of the people have accomplished. If any one should still think that reconstructive work in Ireland is

a mere wasteful and cumbersome machinery of charity, let him come to Connemara, and stay, as I did, first in a place which has not been thoroughly worked over by the reconstructive agency, and then in a place like this which has. The difference can only be described as astounding. It is not merely the neat, clean weather-proof houses, and the better methods of working and living; it is the positive difference in the people —in their intelligence, their greater robustness of mind, their physical health—I would even say their happiness, if I felt that there was any possible way of judging what happiness in others is, or wherein it consists. One would think that they were a different race from the cowed, silent, hopeless people of the untouched districts; but they are exactly the same, with an interest in life added, and a temporal ambition put beside the eternal. 'We will always like to be working,' said a man who was doing some unnecessary jobs about the boat I was sailing; and he added, with a delightful mixture of persons and tenses used by the Irish who have only a little English, 'A working man, he was better to be working always; we will always be better myself when we had something to do.' How unlike the traditional Ireland; and yet it is already becoming a characteristic point of view with people in this place.

There is a great island here, close to the main-

land, containing excellent land for pasture and tillage. This was bought and divided into holdings each of a size sufficient to support a family in decency and comfort. Then people who had holdings on the worst land in the neighbourhood —holdings that would hardly support a frog— were transported to the new land. Sound, plain little cottages were built for them instead of the huts of turf and stone in which they had lived before; a harbour was made for their boats and, in some cases, money advanced for boat-building. All the work was done locally and for fair wages; and the people who had formerly barely existed began to live, to make some margin of money over their needs, and to pay the instalments, in rent and purchase, which ultimately made them the sole possessors of these new lands and houses. Is not that a really satisfactory story? Of course it is not always quite plain sailing, and there are plenty of discouragements; but one positive piece of work, visible and accomplished, is more powerful than a hundred failures, and is the most eloquent of all arguments. My friend who 'will always like to be working' is not himself a child of the Congested Districts Board, but a man whose own holding was, with fishing and kelp-burning, sufficient to support him and his family; but he has shared in the moral effect produced by the betterment of the others, and is an example of the

way in which the benefits of positive action extend to many others besides those who receive direct help.

And after this re-establishment on the land comes the education that alone can make it a permanent benefit instead of a temporary relief. On the wildest part of the road that leads to this extremity I passed two little plots of land, each the size of a small cottage garden. All round them were desolate bog and rock, scraped and trenched here and there to grow a few potatoes; but on these little plots were flourishing a field of rich hay and a heavy crop of oats. The contrast was startling: but two placards explained this little lesson of the Department of Agriculture—placards stating the constituents, weight, and cost of the few pounds of chemical fertiliser with which the field had been dressed. It was to me at once a most primitive and a most striking example of Sir Horace Plunkett's work in Ireland—a work so humble in its beginnings, so obvious and so elementary and so patient, and yet so far-reaching in its results and possibilities. Very eloquent, very touching to the wayfarer on that lonely road are these two waving crops. Round them are the sodden bog and the glacial mountain showing what Nature will do if left to herself; near them the pitiful crops of poor foodstuff, showing the best that the peasant of these parts, untaught and

unhelped, has done for himself; and there stand the little fields, waving and ripening in wind and sun, to show what the same peasant, by due labour of draining and banking, and by a simple external aid easily within his means, can accomplish if he will. Better than any pamphlets, lectures, or tracts is this lesson of these two fields. 'I cannot,' says the hopeless peasant. 'You can,' shout the little fields; and the peasant, passing that way again, takes heart to say 'I will.'

I sailed one day to the Aran Islands; it took us two and a half hours to go to Kilronan and five to beat back, and it was wonderful to be feeling one's way after dark through these rock-strewn seas; but it was more wonderful still to be on the Islands, and to be aware of their utter difference from the rest of the world—their amazing detachment from any life but their own, their apparent prosperity, their unrealisable antiquity, the beauty of their children, the humour and character of their ancient men and women. They seemed to be inhabited entirely by artists' models. And of the view from the summit of Inishmore, from the cliffs of Moher in Clare right out to Kilkee, to the incomparable mountains of Connemara, from Galway to Slyne Head; who shall write? There are days that one remembers always, but cannot describe; and this day of sun and wind on Aran, of wide views, of ever-changing seas and skies,

of nightfall at sea, of anxious progress homewards by ghostly reefs and headlands lit only by their foam—this day is of that unforgettable, uncommunicable company that goes to make memories at once mysterious and splendid.

I have told you nothing of that other side to one's life here—the world of bog and mountain, stream and lough, of which the sea-trout is lord. Long days with a fishing-rod on a lough are absorbing enough while they last, but there is not much to tell about them; the drift down-wind, the intent rhythmical casting, the recurring procession of Blue-Jay, Claret-and-Grouse, and Butcher over brown water; the rare—too rare—curve of light and splash that means a sea-trout; the long row up the lake with lines trailing and eyes free to watch the silver furrows on the dark lough or the cloud shadows that darken the heather on the soaring mountain side, with no sound but the cry of the curlew or the occasional hopeful remark of the gillie—these are dream-like things, selfish joys which one cannot communicate and cannot share. For you see I have come to the end of my cure, and am beginning to fall in love with solitude; so I must move on into the world again, and let all these things that are realities now fall into their due place in my life, as backgrounds and memories. Memories are like sunsets; as the sunset to a summer's day, so is

memory to a little piece of life like this; the active properties, sensation and experience, are gone, and only a soft and fading picture remains. Gradually the less essential things disappear; joys, pains, excitements, discomforts fade out, until at last the ultimate essence and result will alone remain.

In that day I shall see, a dark, low line against the sunset, my island of Inishmuskerry.

FRANCE

I

NUITS ROUGES

THE village, when I saw it first in the sunshine of a summer morning, wore that air of innocent tranquillity that is especially characteristic of French villages. Its houses, shaded for almost half a mile on either hand by a noble avenue of acacias, lined the main road, which vanished into the forest of Fontainebleau at one end, and at the other turned into the smiling valley of the Loing. In one of these houses were my quarters—clean, simple, and happily devoid of stuffy upholstery and superfluous ornaments. I looked out of the window. A dog or two slept lazily in the sunshine; here and there an old woman sat knitting on a chair by the roadside; a horse, released from the shafts of his cart, was grazing under the trees. There was no sound but, from the railway near by, the growing, passing, and diminishing roar of the *Rapide* on its way to the South. I do not mind the sound of trains passing; they prevent me from being lonely, and remind me of the great world that lies beyond these tranquillities. And

looking out upon this scene I said to myself: Here I shall find peace; here, among these innocent souls, far from the distraction of cities, my mind will refresh itself; here, in the sweet air of the forest, my town-jaded nerves will be braced, and in tranquillity of body and mind I can labour at my appointed task.

I should have known, of course. I could not plead lack of experience; experience of France especially, where tranquillity is almost unknown. But I am afraid I do not learn very well from experience; I find her a dull instructress. When I have stumbled with her through my lesson of the moment I throw all my books away; and in an examination in the faculty of not being taken by surprise, I am afraid my name would stand very low on the lists. This policy has considerable advantages, but it has disadvantages also, as in the present case. There were many signs for me to read, but I did not read them; I was pleased with the acacia trees and the wallpaper and furniture of my apartments, and I shut my eyes to other signs; although at least the word RALENTIR in great capital letters on a board at the entrance to the village, and the piles of blue and red boxes by the roadside, with the words 'Moto' and 'Auto' conspicuously on them, should have reminded me that this was the national road between Paris and Marseilles. I spent some

days in the gradual discovery of this and other things.

I will pass over the shrieks of the railway at night, loud and sudden shrieks, eloquent not of the rapid, humming passage of express trains, but of the endless shunting and marshalling of goods trains—shrieks that echo from one side of the valley to the other, and are of such startling, piercing, and angry quality, and rend the air with such surprising suddenness, that even yet they make my heart jump. I will not say much of the motor-cars, although for every hour of pleasure I have had in driving large motor-cars swiftly I have now paid, as is only just, an ample price from nervous punishment inflicted through their use by others. The French, who are great lovers of childish noise, are more fiendish than any other nation in the invention of dreadful instruments of warning for their motor-cars; and the motor-cars that rush under my window late at night and in the small hours of the morning, with open exhausts and instruments of the siren and dying-pig pattern which always reach their high note just under my window, impart to my village world the character of a battlefield and a slaughterhouse combined. I will pass over the cats, whose dreadful nocturnal combats in the moonlight suggest the Day of Judgment; the procession of carts that begins at five in the

morning, each bearing a sharp, loud and impudent motor-horn which the drivers toot during the whole of their slow progress through the village at every hour of the day; the shouting and badinage with which the street is filled; and the cocks—that demented race into which I sometimes think the evil spirit entered when it left the herd of Gadarene swine—raucously shrieking and answering each other throughout the short summer night. I will say nothing of these things because I have decided to accept them; and I will come at once to the butcher.

Next door to me is a new and pretty house, the lower part taking the form of a neat little shop, the open front of which is always veiled by a gay striped curtain. On the morning after my arrival I was awakened from sound sleep by a great concussion, which was repeated several times, so that the room and the bed were shaken by it. I was not fully awake; and I had for a second or two that sense of great disaster which is produced by loud and inexplicable sounds in the night. But the concussions continued, and, becoming wide awake and listening, I heard that they were accompanied by human voices, so that at least, if there was a disaster, some one was up and knew about it. The sounds continued, and apparently came from immediately beneath me; as they recurred with great frequency and violence I abandoned my

first theory that there had been an explosion as untenable. To my amazement the voices accompanying them sometimes uttered themselves in laughter, so that apparently the occurrence, whatever it was, was not even serious. The sounds continued very spasmodically, in character something between the blow of a steam-hammer and the crush of a woodman's axe in a tree; and sometimes there was a whining sound like sawing, but the saw was working on something harder than wood; the note was shrill. And gradually the dreadful consciousness came upon me that the shop underneath was a butcher's shop, and that the butcher was in it, chopping meat. But what kind of meat? What joints were these, which had to be severed with such blows that the whole building vibrated; what chopper or cleaver was this, and what arm that wielded it? It seemed as though a feast of giants were preparing. I was so shocked and interested for a time that I hardly noticed the inconvenience of the hour, and later, indeed, fell into a troubled sleep.

That was the introduction to a form of torture which I have found quite unique. In the spell of terribly hot weather that lasted in this place for more than a month it resolved itself into the following procedure. At about half-past two, or sometimes earlier, I would be awakened by a thud on the other side of the wall—that was the

butcher getting out of bed. Two minutes afterwards (so brief was his toilet) I would hear the opening of the shop doors downstairs; then voices would sound, not in low tones and whispers such as most people use who have to be astir when everything else is asleep, but loud and unashamed. On the other side of the road is a stable containing a horse and an ass; at a quarter to three some one would go over and harness the horse and put it into a cart. This was always the signal for the ass to break into a lamentable and incredibly loud manifestation of that insanity with which the animal creation seems at times to be stricken. Then, or somewhere about this time, the first blow would fall—a sickening crash with a kind of softness in it, suggestive of the heavy steel tearing its way through flesh and sinew to the bone. Things in the room would tremble, and the loud voice of the butcher, rejoicing like a horse saying Ha! Ha! among the trumpets, would rise to a shout, as though in a transport of joy. The horse and cart would then drive away, and there would be half an hour of chopping; a kind of epicurean chopping, done, one would say, more for pleasure than for necessity—a chop here and there, when the butcher's eye lighted on a more than usually provocative-looking joint—but not serious work. At about this time, too, the butcher began to make other noises, loud

noises in his throat which I will not further particularise, except that they added in a quite dreadful way to the picture which my tortured imagination was conjuring up. Then there would follow a noise of sweeping, and of buckets of water being poured on the floor. What was it that he was sweeping? Why should buckets of water be poured on the floor? What stains were they that had to be thus washed away? And then the cart would come back, it being now about a quarter to four, and the horse would take his stand just under my window. He was fitted with a large collar containing a number of bells that shook whenever he moved; the flies would begin to annoy him, and he would shake himself about once every ten seconds; and once every thirty seconds he would strike his iron shoe on the cobble-stones; this until six o'clock. And on the return of the cart the activity in the shop would become quite dreadful. There were evidently more people than one chopping, but the deep note of the first chopper could always be distinguished in the grisly orchestra. Sometimes, when one was tired of chopping, he would take up a saw, and the whining note would be heard; but I pictured to myself the chief butcher being rather impatient of this finicking method, because when the sawing had continued for a little while there would suddenly come a mighty and sickening

crash, as though the butcher could not restrain himself any longer; and the crash would be followed by a pause, as though for a moment even his gloomy passion had been satiated. But the pause would only be for a moment, and then serious chopping would begin again, accompanied by loud talk and laughter (and by those other sounds), until seven or eight o'clock, when I would rise, trembling and twittering, like a drunkard from a debauch.

Such a story could have but two endings; happily for me it had the least dramatic. The butcher, at my instigation, has been haled before the Judge of the Peace, and has by him been admonished and required not to chop before half-past five in the morning. But if it had gone on, if I had been by some fate compelled to occupy that chamber for a year or more, there would have been a different ending. The butcher would have died—by what means I do not know or care; and I should have been found chopping him with his own chopper on his own table into tiny little pieces, and laughing and shouting as I did it. And I should never have used the saw, only chopped and chopped again until the house shook. And I should have been led forth to death, and the papers would have dwelt indignantly, not only on the murder of an innocent and hard-working tradesman, but on the singularly

brutal circumstance of the chopping up of the body; and no one, except the Providence that adjusted the human nervous system to endure to a certain point and no farther, would have understood.

I have never seen inside the butcher's shop; I have never, to my knowledge, seen the butcher. I do not know whether it was elephants or rhinoceroses that were dismembered in the fragrant summer nights; nor do I know what horrible sin of a former existence this man was expiating, that it was laid upon him to rise up from his bed in the soft, sweet hours of the night, and begin fiendishly to chop corpses with a hatchet. These things are mysteries; and when in the sunshine of day I pass the neat little shop, all modestly veiled behind its gay striped curtain, it seems to me entirely innocent, like the environment of a dream seen by daylight. But I know that it is not the place of a dream; and that, but for me, its innocent-looking door would nightly gape and pour forth a flood of lamplight on to the sleeping road, and that the village would resound to the blows of the chopper crashing through bones.

II

THE FOREST AND THE SEA

FORESTS, like all great wildernesses, have many things in common with the sea. Villages cluster round their shores; there is a forest-side life as there is a sea-side life; and the woodmen are like fishermen, who daily go a little way into the forest to labour, and daily take their toll of its riches. The Forest of Fontainebleau, to the great population that spreads southward of Paris, stands in place of the sea. It has its school of painters like St. Ives, and it is visited, as the sea is visited, by crowds of strangers in search of health or recreation. It stood for a great awakening, in modern French painting, to the possibilities of scenery and atmosphere; but modern French painting has passed out of the stage of scenery-worship, and the glories of Barbizon are a little dulled. In place of the working artist, tramping the forest with his easel and painting stool, the young female American tourist, also equipped with painting material, occupies the neighbourhood of Barbizon; and in

place of the noisy gang of painters and poets who used to inhabit Siron's, mixed parties of young men and women, the young women in high-heeled boots and with a strangely urban air, occupy the discreet pavilions of the forest hotels. On a summer day by Barbizon you may detect, mingled with the odour of the pines, a suspicion of patchouli. The beauties of the forest and the plain remain; the great expanse by Chailly is as lovely at sunset to-day as it was when Millet painted the 'Angelus'; but the intimate and remote charm of Barbizon has gone. It has indeed become the Margate of the forest.

But the surrounding villages are not material to the true charm of Fontainebleau, which remains, in spite of painters and tourists, as inviolate as the sea. People live on its edge, but no one actually lives in it. One crosses it from one point to another as one crosses the sea—or rather as one would make a voyage in a submarine. For there is no level sunlit surface to go upon, no horizon, no long recession of the shore; you plunge at once into the depths and are quickly out of sight of land. Lacking a compass, or without the aid of the beacons or sign-posts by which the main channels are marked, you might be lost in ten minutes. You wade into the shadow, lose sight of the sky, and thenceforward pursue your way in a denser element, a green

twilight into which only a rare sunbeam penetrates. The sandy floor is like the floor of the sea, with rocks rising up from it, the recesses haunted by spiders instead of crabs; with butterflies painted like the rainbow, gaudy dragon-flies, things that glide, things that rustle, creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts; and far above your head, instead of the fishes, birds that glide about silently on their business.

There are two great tides in this forest sea, the tides of spring and autumn. Summer and winter are like periods of slack water, when the forest is without breath or movement of its own—dead. At these dead periods the forest has no tonic quality for the mind, and is friendless to all that side of life which makes for effort or achievement. It is asleep and dreaming; and you may dream or sleep in it and share its green death, but it will not help you to live. For all exhausted nature it has a friendly medicine; if you need repose the forest will give it to you; if you are sick its breath will make you well; but unless you be a certain kind of painter do not look to it for stimulation or encouragement. Its mental climate is mild and relaxing, not bracing. You walk in the company of trees, and more trees, and infinite battalions and hosts of trees, and all the attendants and parasites on trees, but there is nothing more. I do not say that if one lived and worked in the forest, if one's

daily labour were planting or felling, or rooting—if, that is to say, the forest were a matter of course, a part of one's ordinary life, and not a strange sea visited as by a traveller on his voyages—one would not achieve a certain intimacy with this slow and majestic life, and become, as Gabriel Oak became, like a tree oneself. But in summer, at any rate, the forest has no sympathy with anything but the physical side of life, or with those states of dream or reverie, often beautiful in themselves, that rise like mists from the physical life and obscure the heaven of clear thought. I have loved the habitation of this green house in the spring; but living through the long hot summer with its green shade almost at my very door I have instinctively avoided its close and solemn aisles, and in my daily walks sought the open plains, and places where the breezes and the waters move. One becomes thus like those dwellers in seaside towns, so much marvelled at by the holiday visitor, who build their houses with their backs turned to the sea, and who would as soon think of going out in a boat for pleasure as of bathing off the rocks. Such people, if they have a holiday, will make an excursion to the nearest town; and they will even make a picnic into some neighbouring woods; but their choice is to have as little as possible to do with the sea, and to look through their windows on the village

street rather than on the pageant of the tides. It is perfectly natural. For those who dwell on their shores the forest and the sea are the background of life, great and unchanging, like the sky and death; the little things of life, its small pleasures and recreations, belong to the foreground, in which we instinctively seek a contrast and look for something that will stand in relief against the infinite fields beyond.

There is a special quality in the nature of trees which you either can or cannot bear; and it is a quality antipathetic to people who love the sea —by which I mean people who really love the sea, and who know it not merely as a sheet of water on which to take pleasure excursions, or as a piece of scenery, but as a thing to be learned, understood, listened to, and fought with. Perhaps it is because I belong to this class that I find myself a little abashed and uncomfortable in the presence of a great multitude of trees. The solitude of a forest makes me afraid; but one's fear of the sea, even in dangerous and fatal moments, is different; it is a sensation that I find not inimical or unnatural. The disciple of the sea may admire and even adore trees, but he cannot be intimate with them. He does not know their language. He is like a visitor at a foreign court, or a wanderer into temples of the Orient. They are strange beings, unknown gods

living a solemn life of their own high up in the air and deep down in the earth, and murmuring to one another things not understood by man.

But sometimes, lying under the forest canopy and looking up at the swaying tops of pines, I like to think of the ultimate and various destinies of those tall trees; how some may cluster in a company round the spires of churches and cathedrals, and some hold aloft the humming wires that carry messages of life and death over all the world, and some become the masts and spars of ships, to swing and stoop for years over the running billows. For here the two great elements have their meeting and exchange: the sea, drawn up to the clouds, sails landward and visits the forest in showers; while the forest, in ships and masts, in weedy harbour piles, in panelling of rich cabins, in rare inlays, and in the thousand forms to which the humbler woods are put, goes finally down to the sea.

III

THE THREE ROADS

I

OF the three great roads on which men move about the world—the iron road, the stone road, and the road of water—each has its special character, its special associations of fancy that we call romance. In France, especially, where the three are of almost equal importance, their difference of character is specially marked. Not so very long ago, indeed, they could have been distinguished with some accuracy by the kind of people who used them. The rivers and canals were the roads of merchandise; the stone roads, once the roads of armies, were the roads of the peasant; and the iron road was the road of the stranger and the traveller. It is different now. The motor-car has restored to the country roads their original purpose of long-distance communication; the French people themselves now travel extensively throughout their own country on the railroads; and only the rivers and canals continue

to bear their ancient burden of merchandise. Near my village these three great roads run for a space almost side by side through the valley of the Seine; for it was the waters that first found a road for man's footsteps, and it is the course of the waters that these other roads principally follow. But the Seine runs slow and sleepy here; the national road, although according to the sign-board it runs from Paris to Marseilles, leads for us only to the town of Moret, less than two miles away, and the chief road here is the road of iron.

It springs suddenly out of the forest, with a sweeping importance, upon our hillside of little houses and vine-covered walls. It is much the most important thing in our world. The station is almost as big as the village, and of far greater importance, for the two main lines of the P.L.M. branch here, one to travel gloriously down the valleys of the Saone and the Rhone to Marseilles, the other, the Bourbonnais line, to wander off by the Loing and the Yonne to far-away Clermont-Ferrand and the Cevennes. On one hand is the curve into the forest; on the other the spreading expanse of the station and the grass-grown goods-yard, the buildings, the tall row of poplars, the signals, and all the intricate circumstances of an important junction. One set of lines leads straight as far as the eye can see, and disappears in a trembling haze of heat; the other branches away,

held aloft by a great curving viaduct that leads it to the Seine.

To the English eye there must always be something a little odd about the appearance of a French railway. Like all commercial machinery in France it has an unfinished air; it is entirely practical and efficient, but it lacks that wonderful solidity and finish which marks the English railroad, and which is expressed in the words 'permanent way.' The iron road in England, and all its circumstances and belongings, seem designed to last for ever. It is weeded and gravelled like a garden path, the grasses of its embankments cut and reaped in their due season, its hedges clipped, its signal-posts painted and constructed with a careful uniformity, its fences maintained like those of an English park, its walls and buttresses like those of a garrison castle. In France the way is grown often with grasses and weeds, and flowers come to bloom from under the very rails, and pass their fragrant life within an inch of destruction. The way is not sacred as it is in England; you may walk across it and upon it from one platform to another. The signals have an agreeable variety of form and feature. There are large inquiring discs of red or mauve or yellow or blue, with an eccentric glass eye within their circumference; there are semaphores that invite the passage of trains not by the air of acquiescence, chin sunk on chest, of the

English signal, but by utter and perpendicular collapse; and there are great squeaking squares of sheet-iron that rattle in the wind and turn cumbrously on their pivots.

There is a bridge over the line, a little bridge belonging to a little road that leads from one small village on the slope to another smaller village on the plain; and every one who passes over the bridge, men with baskets of fruit or bundles of sticks, women with loads of linen for washing in the river, children on various errands and enterprises, they all stop and stare up and down the line. They wait until at least one train has passed; they follow it with their eyes until it has disappeared in the hazy distance, or been swallowed up in the forest, and then take up their burdens and pass on.

What is the fascination in railways that begins with earliest childhood and, at any rate with people who retain an agreeable curiosity about life, never quite ceases? Is it an inheritance from the wonder of the last century, when they seemed to revolutionise human life, or is it something more subtle and inherent in themselves? There is always for the human being, who walks on legs, a certain fascination in things that go on wheels or in water; but that is not by any means the chief fascination of the railway, for no other vehicle, not even a ship, excites the universal

interest that is accorded to the locomotive engine. Nor can it be the fact that a railway train is a kind of microcosm of life, a house or a town that flees swiftly from one part of the earth to another, containing chairs, and lights, and carpets, and fires, and kitchens, and beds. The ship contains all these things, and is in this sense, and indeed in every sense, a far more wonderful thing than a train; but you either have or have not a natural interest in ships, whereas every one has a natural interest in trains. Probably the secret lies in the fact that, from our first experience to our last, they are associated with the most physically adventurous acts of our life, and with the great spiritual adventures also which result from our being transported from one environment to another. All life and all adventure were contained in our first railway journeys, when every minute gave us something new to learn, and know, and feel; and for life and adventure the railway still stands, even with people whose first little burst of curiosity in life is soon exhausted, and who cease to grow and to live as soon as they can come to a safe anchorage and commit the spiritual suicide known as 'settling down.' And the French railways stand, certainly to foreigners, for very wonderful and beautiful experiences, for by those iron roads they go to Spain, to Switzerland, to the Mediterranean, to Italy, to Egypt, to India. Even if

you are going no farther than Paris there is something very inspiring in the sight at Calais of the carriages labelled with such romantic and far-away names; something thrilling, at midnight on Friday, in the long and lighted splendour of the P. and O. Express, and at three o'clock on any afternoon between June and October in the aspect in the same place of the Simplon Express, with its inspiring row of labels: Paris, Lausanne, Brigue, Milan, Venice, Trieste, Berne, and Interlaken; and something magnificent in the train that leaves Calais every Thursday afternoon, and bears the astounding title of the Calais-Marseilles-Bombay Express. And the myriad associations that these names call up in the minds of thousands and thousands of people are definitely linked also with the iron road in France, and with an unbroken line of experience that begins there by the green waterside of Calais, and that ends, who shall say where?

II

Very early one morning (having been awakened from dreams of blood and driven forth by the butcher) I met a man marching along the road. He was lean and athletic; he pushed before him, like a perambulator, a small enclosed box or cart on three wheels. To the front of it was harnessed a mongrel dog of the foxhound-bull-terrier

species, who pulled briskly at his trace, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left. The man and I fell into conversation; and as the morning was very hot and a wayside auberge handy we paused to drink a glass of wine together —the young Burgundy of that country, which is to the great vintage wines what the earliest twilight of a summer morning is to the red vesper that blazes in the west. A little river purled behind us; a great acacia tree shaded us from the hot sun; the dog immediately stretched himself flat in the dust; and while we sat and drank our wine the man told me his business and destination. It appeared that his cart contained some kind of pastry, which he vended at a great distance; he made this journey by road three times a week, and he had come ten kilometres in the last hour. Having made this statement he drank his wine, and calling to the dog stepped out again with long, swinging strides, the two shadows stretching far ahead in the white dust of the road.

I did not believe him when he said that he had walked ten kilometres in the hour, but it seemed to me a natural statement. It is a brave and agreeable trait in human nature that makes people lie about the distance they have walked. Later I saw this man in my own village, the cart abandoned, and the dog unharnessed and running about the road on the ordinary business of dogs.

The man still bore himself bravely and with a slightly foreign air, like a mariner who walks the streets of a strange port, knowing that his craft lies moored but temporarily beside the quay. And this was only the moral effect of his long and swift walk in the early morning. He had come from another world; he had been alive and doing while the villagers had still been slumbering in their beds; along miles of the road he had been observing that lively stir of nature that makes it high noon in the hedgerows before mankind has well begun the day. And, remembering his lie, I praised him in my heart for it. For the man who walks these long roads of France, and boasts of greater distances than the milestones show, lies only in a physical sense. By the dead reckoning of the milestones you may prove him a liar, but dead reckoning is not the whole truth about travelling; there are the drifts of the mind, and the tides and currents of thought, to be taken into account; and the man who walks truly, savouring and enjoying all that he sees and feels, far outstrips the cold measures of the surveyor. His imagination is always ahead of him; and when his feet come to rest he has a mile or two to add to the reckoning for the distance his thoughts have travelled. For a road is essentially a thing on which to advance, on which to proceed from one place to another. To 'go for a walk' on a

road is a miserable thing—I mean to go a little way and then come back. To retrace one's steps at all is against instinct, and almost impossible for some natures; and people who go for a walk will take almost any trouble to find a different road by which to return, so that they may thus cheat themselves, and procure the illusion that they have continued to advance.

Almost all the literature of the road is concerned either with scenery, or with eating and drinking, or with human encounters or philosophic reflections by the way; very little of it with the actual business of walking—that miraculous business of lifting up one's feet and putting them down again, while throughout miles and hours of travel the body is supported on one leg at a time. And this is one of the many instances where literature is truer to life than it is commonly supposed to be; and to me, at any rate, its preoccupation with the things incidental to walking seems natural enough. I like everything about a walk except the actual walking. I like to read about it, I like the thought of distant spires and hill-tops attained by steady muscular effort; but, to tell the truth, I prefer to go on a horse. Let the horse do the walking; I will do the thinking, and do it all the better for being fresh and cool. I shall certainly do it a great deal better than if I am plunged in that pleasant but stupefying dream, the hypnosis

induced by such prolonged, regular, and monotonous action as lifting up one's feet and putting them down again. All the imaginative business of arriving tired and perspiring and dusty—which is not really pleasant—the horse will vicariously perform for me ; I can enjoy it through his person ; to see him rubbed down and fed and stalled in the fragrant darkness of an old stable will give me great pleasure, and pleasure none the less real because I am not in a state of physical distress myself. This is the ideal way of walking, which is finely conveyed in the French phrase 'to go for a walk on a horse.'

Is this craven, and luxurious, and Sybaritic, and degenerate ? Well, then, if I am to walk by road, let it be on some road that winds about, where I cannot see too far before me, where every corner gives a new view, and where sight and imagination need not far outstrip one's footsteps : let me walk on the roads of England. I find something disheartening in these straight and splendid roads of France, ruled like white lines across the country, with their rows of trees, thousands and thousands in a row, placed with the regularity of railway sleepers. Such roads were made for armies, not for natural men and women. On such a road, when you come to a hill-top, you see before you, perhaps for five miles, a straight white ribbon lying across the plain ; before you have gone

half a mile you have traversed it all backwards and forwards with your eyes, have travelled in your imagination to its farthest limit, have seen all there is to be seen, so that there remains nothing but the mere physical business of moving your body along the remaining four and a half miles. The engineering is magnificent, but there is something unfriendly in it. I remember once starting to walk with a friend from Dieppe to Paris, and taking too long a stage on the first day. The distance, I think, was twenty-five miles. We did everything we should not have done: we loitered in the early part of the day, we wandered into forests by the roadside, we ate hungrily and too well at a country inn, we talked continuously, with the result that towards nightfall two miserable, dust-covered figures began the descent into the Normandy town of Neufchatel-en-Bray. The approach to this town, which lies at the foot of a hill, is a triumph of engineering. The national road winds down in a gentle spiral, by a hardly perceptible gradient, round the vast circumference of the hill. Below us, a stone's throw away, twinkled the welcoming lights of the town; a jump would almost have landed us upon its roofs. But the broad road, in obedience to the laws of mathematics, curved grandly away from it, fetched a great compass, and entered it from the other side. And yard by yard, and perch by

perch, did we limp down this vast avenue, examining its surface before each footstep lest there should be a stone or inequality which would further mortify our bruised members. I thought on that occasion, and think still, that it would have been kinder if the French engineers, in making such grand military avenues, had also cut a little path, straight and steep, whereby the ordinary mortal might reach his shelter for the night. Perhaps if we had looked we should have found some such natural path; but we dared not leave the certainty of the main road on a mere chance, with the risk of perhaps adding to our footsteps and finding no other way. The short cut, if there was one, would probably have been steep and rough, as most short cuts are; but I think we should have put up with greater pain to the feet for the sake of greater ease to the mind. For it is the mind that really suffers from the severity of a long road; it is the thought of distances in front of us that is apt to be so daunting; and there are few who would not, given the choice of attaining some end by a long and painful struggle or by a short and sharp agony, choose the short and sharp. Or perhaps it is a matter of temperament, of a choice between moral and physical courage; the long road being a moral, and the short a physical discipline. But I am not one of those who ask with the poets to have 'the road before me';

to have done a thing that is laborious is a greater satisfaction than to have it still to do; and, provided I have really paced it, and not ridden it on a horse or an automobile, I prefer to have the road behind me, and the view and the rest before me.

III

The coast of France, in spite of its extent, never suggests a maritime nation; one must go inland to discover the true French world of water. And of the three roads in France this road of waters is the most characteristic and the best, the dustless, noiseless road that has no hills, but only innumerable curves and level changes—the road moreover that moves of itself. One says loosely of other roads that they 'go' from this place to that; but it is not true. The patch of road outside your door remains there from year to year, whereas if you live by a river, although you never move a step, hundreds of miles of road will go past your eyes in the year. You may go yourself on the stone or iron road from Chalon to Macon; but the road of water, the Saone, the silver high-road of Burgundy, goes there of itself.

This piece of country of which I write is full of such moving highways, being traversed by the Seine, the Loing, and the Yonne; they are all canalised, their beauty as rivers unimpaired and

their utility as canals ensured by locks and weirs. They give the landscape a very friendly appearance, peculiarly French in its combination of deep and pale green, and rich in lines of willow and of poplar that advertise the watery road; while the shouts of the bargees and the great echoing, explosive cracks of whips that resound all over the country redeem it from that sombre gravity that seems always to brood over great tracts of agricultural land. One regards with an ancient reverence this life of rivers and canals, so prodigiously slow, and yet always in motion; so fertile in surprises that, when walking across a country that seems deserted, one may suddenly come upon a road of water and a whole town of families and moving houses tucked in a fold of the ground. I suppose there is no occupation into which the sense of time enters so slightly as it does into the occupation of the bargee. These great and noble barges of the French canals seem, when they are at rest, like rocks or islands, immovable in the water, their steep black sides rising to support polished and decorated beams and superstructures of glass and rare woods; a little garden of flowers before the windows and a cage of canaries on the roof of the parlour, and children sprawling everywhere over a deck that seems limitless in extent. The getting under way of such a structure is a matter of hours, and when

the straining horses or mules have at last tightened the wire rope that reaches to the mast-head, it is almost impossible to say at what moment the great ark begins to move through the water. But start it does, with infinite expenditure of labour and shouts and whip-cracking; and once started you would think it would never stop; but if you go away and come back the next day you may find it tied up a quarter of a mile down the stream, waiting its turn at the lock. It is the most self-contained life in the world, that of these barge families, and always tempts one by its union of movement with repose. Independence of the external world is its chief charm; for the very horses that draw the barge through the heat of the day climb on board at night and feed and rest in the stable which they have transported, being thus in a way cannibals of their own strength. It is pleasant to look upon, I say; but I doubt very much if such a life would be really tolerable. The slowness which is so poetic to contemplate would, unless one were trained to it, surely become exasperating at times. If all the things that were said about such a life were true one would expect to find the canal bargeman and his family persons of a singular spirituality, rising on a wave of serener life than ours, and living in a world of dream and phantasy. The most superficial observation of these people must disappoint this

expectation; they are indeed notorious for violence and profanity. It is sad, but there is a tonic truth in it too, for scenery never made a poet yet, and nature is as near to the brute as to the spirit. The bargeman is but a simpler and more natural person than the rest; he lives and moves and has his being in the most elementary of all human vehicles, the Noah's ark, with his family and his beasts around him; and we have no reason to suppose that Noah was a person of any singular refinement.

The gayest spots on the road of water in France are to be found at the confluence of two rivers, where the interchange of traffic, the meeting and passing of so many barges, and the accumulation of merchandise and the plying of the ship-building craft, combine to make an agreeable maritime commotion. Such rivalries in the matter of Cafés du Commerce and Hotels du Confluent, such vending of wine by the bottle and the barrel, and of bread by the foot and the yard; such orgies of clothes-washing by the assembled women of the town! In the long, floating washhouses, each in her own compartment, furnished with its bottles of liquid-soap and its piles of linen, the women can work and gossip at the same time, dipping the soapy garments into the clear river, which is clouded but for a moment, and making such a slapping and battering of wet stuffs with

pieces of wood that it resounds over all the countryside.

I know no people who work at once so hard and so cheerfully as the peasant women of France; those of them that are not at work in the fields are eternally occupied in either of the two great primitive feminine tasks—washing and cooking. The cooking is a desultory affair, taken as an accompaniment to other things; but the washing is done in community, and, especially where there are a great number of bargewomen together, it becomes a kind of festival. This washing of dirty linen in public seems to be an essentially French habit; and there is surely much to be said for it. It can only be characteristic of a country where there is much flowing water, and where the climate makes out-of-door work tolerable and pleasant; and the sight of a woman wheeling her barrow-load of household stuffs to the river-side and wheeling it back pure and clean, is surely a pleasanter thing than the solitary, steamy rites that one imagines are taking place in the private wash-houses of England, where in darkness and malodorous vapour women clatter about a stone floor that swims in soapy water. The river is none the fouler, to our senses at any rate, for all the dirt that it washes away; and the linen is so much the whiter and sweeter for being washed in the river water and the sunshine. Much of

our washing is only partly a sanitary matter; it is a ceremonial also, and has as strong a moral as a physical effect. How much better morally than the solitary stooping over the dark tub must be this washing in the running river, in the company of neighbours, with the sights and sounds of the river for refreshment and the talk of the village for entertainment.

There is no river or canal in France but is furnished with its line of anglers, for the most part as still and silent and incurious as the church spires. The fabled patience of all fishermen is in France carried to a kind of ecstasy of contentment. They fish more and catch less than any other race. To stand all day in one spot over the still waters of a canal for the sake of three fishes the size of a whitebait is to have reduced almost to a minimum the ratio of reward to labour. But of course it is not the fishes, it is the fishing that is its own reward. No river fisherman ever fished for fishes only, he fishes for peace, for solitude, or for recreation of mind; and though his basket be empty of fishes at the end of the day, it may nevertheless be full of other booty. The French fisherman apparently can achieve his Nirvana anywhere; you see him in Paris occupying his scanty midday leisure fishing in the Seine, with the world visibly and audibly around him; and he takes his pleasure, not only in the thicket of

willows or by the lock on the lonely hillside, but also in the midst of a roaring traffic of motors and tramcars, and under the very wheels of carts and omnibuses.

Of the French rivers that are known to me the Rhone seems to be the most noble and the Loing the most lovable. I know no river that conveys the impression of rolling so exactly as the Rhone below Valence. The Garonne has its moments of greatness, as when it first smells the sea near Beautiran; but the Rhone, which is too wild and turbulent to be very much tamed to commerce, has a majesty and awfulness entirely its own. The Seine is a very bourgeois river, and, in spite of its importance from Rouen to Le Havre, we should not mention it in the same breath with the others if it had not the good fortune to bear Paris on its banks. Of the rivers of mere beauty, the Loire has its devotees, I know, and the arches and battlements of old castles reflected in its brimming expanses have their own place in the memory. But the little Loing, that never grows old and never dies the death of great rivers in the sea, that is the stream I love best. From Nemours to Moret its happy youth is spent wandering among willows and rushes, and prattling over clear shallows that lie enclosed in a world of meadows. It has no premonition of its end; at one moment it is in the full tide of its happy youth, and a few

hundred yards lower, turning a sudden corner, it is lost in the Seine. It knows no broadening maturity soiled by drains and threshed by the propellers and paddles of commercial craft; it comes to an end suddenly, in innocence, a few sleepy canal boats being all the burden that it has known. It is a little river, and has a little life and a little death; it is borne unconscious to the sea, the destiny of all waters; but there, although one would not speak of them while living in the same breath, it meets even with its great neighbour the Rhone, on equal terms.

IV

THE OBERLAND-SIMPLON EXPRESS

EVERY evening when the twilight falls we meet on the bridge; a crooked old woman, three little children and I. The old woman works in the fields, the children in the school by the church, and I in the village; our little world is less than the half of a mile long; but at dusk when our work is over we can look at the trains that come flying past out of the forest, and let our thoughts follow them on the long shining road that leads to Italy and the sea.

All day the sun has burned us; but here in the evening it is cool, and we lean idly against the parapet breathing the sweet air that steals from the forest. We can see the signals and their great eyes of ruby that glare at us in the dark and make blood-red pools of light on the ground; we can see the signalman reading in his house of glass, and hear the chime of the bells that ring messages to him. From far down the road comes a charcoal-burner home from the forest; he is singing as he walks, and his footfalls grow louder as he

passes beneath us, bent down under the weight of his basket. Then the signals clash, and the wires tingle, and the red eyes turn to yellow, staring anxiously into the forest; the footsteps and the song die away down the road; below us in the darkening valley the lights come out; above us, in the amber sky, the stars.

As we hold our breath in the stillness there comes a murmur like the voice of the sea in a shell. It is hushed and then heard again; lost as the breeze stirs the forest trees, and then heard nearer and deeper in the darkness, now like the sound of the seashore itself, now, nearer still, with a beating rhythm like the galloping of a thousand horses. Two burning eyes leap on us out of the forest; with a shriek and roar and a hurricane of wind the train hurls itself beneath us, all the sky reverberating to the white heat of the furnace, all the world gloriously shaking with light and fire and thunder. And when we turn from gazing after it the fire and the thunder are gone; the signals have ruby eyes again, the signalman sits reading in his house of glass.

In the silence the yellow moon sails out from behind the forest trees, and follows us as we walk homeward up the hill to sleep. Before we wake the fire and the thunder will have buried themselves deep beneath the mountain snows, and, before we sleep again, have come to rest beside the lagoons of Venice.

A TROPICAL ISLAND

I

LANDFALL

TO visit the West Indies in winter is to have an experience at once as vivid and as unreal as it is possible to imagine. You leave the English climate at its darkest and worst, and English life at its full tide; and you go straight into the heart of summer and idleness—summer so deep and idleness so complete that you are almost cheated into believing that life consists of summer and idleness. And in a few weeks or months you are back again in England, back again in what still looks like winter to you, although at home they call it the beginning of spring; back amid chills and fogs and the roaring activity of human life and interests that make London the centre of the world. And you wonder if it can be true, if you have not been dreaming, if that memory of blazing sunshine and giant vegetation and glowing, gorgeous colour is not a thing of the imagination, or the atmosphere of a fairy world which you have visited only in the spirit. It is an experience well worth having, and for people

who can afford to take a holiday in the winter by far a more complete change of scene and environment than any rapid rush to the South of France or to Egypt, where so much of one's own familiar world is taken with one. For the West Indies are a new world; people there have different interests, talk about different things, live a wholly different life from ours; and the very link that binds them to us, the imperial link, gives their distance and remoteness and strangeness of life all the greater interest and value. A tour among the islands, with a day or two at each and perhaps ten days in Jamaica, is the usual programme of winter visitors to the West Indies; but I preferred to spend all my time in one, by far the most beautiful of the greater islands, the island of Trinidad, and to learn it and know it and remember it as well as possible. For travellers of experience soon find that rapid, superficial, and fleeting impressions of many different places are no real furniture for the mind, and that to get any knowledge or memory of a place one must not merely look at it, but live in it and become for a time part of its life. One must give a piece of one's own life in exchange for a piece of the life of a foreign land; and it is an exchange that is nearly always worth making.

It is a little unfortunate that Barbados is the first island at which the traveller touches—

unfortunate for the traveller, but fortunate for Barbados. Almost any land seen after a fortnight's voyage at sea appears beautiful; and to eyes that have last looked on the dark and rainy coasts of England or France in December the vision of shores steeped in sunshine, white houses, waving palm trees, and the sudden scarlet of hibiscus and poinsettia can hardly seem otherwise than gorgeous. And there are, in fact, many less beautiful things to be seen than the island of Barbados in the sunshine of early morning. It is about the size of the Isle of Wight, flat and of proportions easily taken in at a glance; very green to look upon, and therefore grateful to eyes accustomed latterly only to the subtle shades of greys and the blues that the sea offers; but that is really all the æsthetic value of Barbados. Such reputation for beauty as it achieves is founded partly on this sudden and disproportionate enthusiasm of the sea-worn tourist who gives it credit for what are really his own sensations of pleasure and relief at seeing land, and partly on the inveterate and magnificent patriotism of its inhabitants, who do seriously believe that it is one of the most beautiful spots on the globe. I doubt if there ever was a pride and local patriotism more real and enduring than the pride of the Barbadian in his land. When I went ashore in Barbados and said that that I was going to stay

in Trinidad, people's faces fell, and a look of concern came over them. I thought the plague must be there, or the yellow fever at least; but it was more sympathy than alarm that was written on the countenances of my friends. 'What a pity,' they said, 'what a pity that your first impressions of the West Indies will be derived from Trinidad! Almost any other island would have been better, or if you had only been round the other islands first, then you would have realised that you must not judge the rest of us by Trinidad. Dear me! what a pity.' My heart sank in the way that one's heart sinks when one arrives in a strange town and discovers that one has committed oneself irrevocably to the wrong hotel. Very genuine and deep was the sympathy felt for me in Barbados because I was going to live in Trinidad; and it was not until later that I found that I had jolted up against by far the greatest and most bitter of the inter-island jealousies. For Barbados, to put it frankly, can hardly endure the name of Trinidad. Trinidad is exquisitely beautiful, Barbados is rather plain; Trinidad is large and rich, Barbados is small and poor; Trinidad is settled by old French and Spanish families and cocoa-owning English planters who are rich enough, or who take a large enough view of finance, to be able to travel constantly to Europe; Barbados contains none of this fascinating element,

and its white popluation is almost entirely British, too poor and too honest, most of them, to gamble gaily with Fortune and make long journeys; Trinidad is Catholic, Barbados is Protestant—need I say any more? But Barbados has one fine source of revenge. It catches the English traveller and tourist first, fresh and innocent from the sea, and tells him about Trinidad. . . . And if he is only a tourist and sees for himself no more of Trinidad than its wonderful jumble of forest-covered peaks as his ship lies for twenty-four hours sweltering far out in the bay of Port-of-Spain he will, after the manner of tourists, believe what Barbados has told him. And he will not go ashore, for fear of the yellow fever, and the plague, and the malarial mosquito, and the tick, and the jigger, and the sand-fly, and the land crab.

Nevertheless, this fine jealousy on the part of Barbados is founded upon a splendid quality—a local pride and patriotism that rises above both fact and reason alike. It is the pride of the Barbadians that has made Barbados what it is, and it would be well for some of the other islands, Trinidad included, if they had a little of that fine spirit of pride in their own land and in their own people, allied to such splendid loyalty to the Empire, as Barbados shows. For it was a Barbadian, returning fresh from a long visit to Europe, from sojourns in great capitals and from mingling

as a spectator amid pageants and ceremonies, who said on sighting again the mile or two of flat shore for which his ship was making, 'Thank God, I am back in the world again!'

The very first impression of anything has a value and vividness all its own. Often it is untrue, and has to be corrected afterwards; nothing can or ought to be deduced from it, and it is no safe guide to material facts or conditions. But often also it has a subtle spiritual truth that no amount of laborious investigation can reveal, and that may fade and become lost when knowledge has been acquired. The first impression of the winter traveller to the shores of the West Indies is a human one, and is concerned with the black race. Before the steamer is anchored, crowds of niggers are yelling and shouting and screaming for pennies alongside, diving and scrambling, pushing and fighting and making pandemonium down below in the bright water. It is not really a pretty sight, and contains in only a very small degree the element of picturesqueness which is usually attributed to such scenes. The negroes are always grotesque and generally extremely ugly; their voices and cries are hideous, and when you go ashore, and land and walk in the hot white street and see fresh types of ugliness in negro women absurdly and grotesquely tricked out in styles and fashions destined to draw attention to

the beauty of white people, your sensation is probably one of a slight sinking of the heart. It is an inevitable sinking, such as one feels at first on arriving at a town in the Southern States of America. One seems to have fallen into a world half populated by trained and intelligent apes. Yet there is this difference: in Southern America there is a sharp line drawn between black and white; there are separate coaches on the railway and separate seats in the tramcars for the black people, who accept their inferiority with a smiling contentment that is both natural and right, and that robs their presence of offence. But in the British West Indies the negro mingles with the crowd, and jostles against the white man, and can sit with him at the public table and enter the same public vehicle with him; and it is that which makes one's first impression of the nigger there so disagreeable. For it is not because he is ugly or brutal or grotesque that his presence dismays you; it is because he is, or appears to be, your equal. That is, in my opinion, fundamentally wrong; and no amount of argument or theory can ever make it right. I will not be betrayed into an excursion on the negro question; but I am recording impressions, and that is the first impression the ordinary English traveller will receive on making landfall in the West Indies.

II

EXTERNALS

YOUR first impression on approaching Trinidad, as your last on leaving it, is one of splendour. As it first appears to you from sea it is not a line of land, but a height, dim and pale at first between the paler seas and dimmer southern skies of dawn; and as you come nearer you see that all the heights, from shore to peak, are thickly clothed with forest. You come nearer still, and in the hot morning sunshine the hills begin to reveal an infinite variety of shape and contour and colour, one throwing a shadow upon another, and the valleys showing dark between the rounded slopes of the hills. And you do not realise the scale of it all until perhaps you notice another steamer ahead of you, a big steamer, close in against the shore, which nevertheless looks like a toy boat against the towering background of forest. The valleys with which the heights are cleft run steeply down to the water's edge, and there, as you stand close in to the steep shore, little bays are one after another revealed,

beautiful with palm trees and pale strands of sand or shells, and crowned with a riot of vegetation, deep and rank and green. And gradually, in the stillness and increasing heat, a curious sense begins to grow upon you, a sense of something sinister in all this vivid beauty. . . . Presently amid the tree-clad slopes right ahead an opening lead of blue water appears, and then another and another; these are the Bocas, named after the mouths or jaws of various beasts—the Dragon's Mouth, the Monkey's Mouth. The blue waters of the Caribbean swing through them in strong currents and eddies, making them formidable for all sailing craft; but the great mail steamer, her engines rung down to half-speed, her decks alive with people in white flannels and muslins, armed with cameras and prism binoculars, glides easily between these towering virgin slopes into the great land-locked bay of Port-of-Spain, the shores of Venezuela showing dimly to the west and the smoke of the town itself smudging the southern horizon.

Port-of-Spain lies between you and everything else in Trinidad. To many people it is the whole of Trinidad, since it is the capital and the only large town and the centre of social and official life. But it is not Trinidad, as many a planter who spends lonely months among the cocoa on the distant hills can tell you. Nevertheless, your

first impressions are bound to be received there. One does not look for ancient monuments or evolved beauty of architecture in a colonised island of the tropics; and certainly if one did, one would seek them in vain in Trinidad. In their place you get a kind of rough-and-ready suitability that is not without a certain elementary beauty of its own—the well-planned town, very white and hot, yet agreeably interspersed with squares and places of a surprising greenness, and with all the charming contrasts of light and shade that you get from awnings and galleries and covered balconies in brilliant sunshine. But you do not linger in the town; you are driven rapidly up one of the white streets towards the hills that are their barrier at one end as the sea is at the other, until you come upon what is obviously the centre of social life in Port-of-Spain—the Savannah.

The Savannah is more than the centre of Port-of-Spain—it is the centre of life in Trinidad. You cannot know anything about life there unless you know the Savannah and the life of the Savannah, with its golf-course and race-course and polo ground and football ground, the wandering herds of cattle, the little private cemetery of the Spanish family who gave the land to the town hidden among trees in the middle of it; the Pitch Walk which is gay at sundown with people walking together or sitting under the shade of the great silk-cotton

trees ; the Savannah where you ride in the morning and round which you drive in the evening, the half-circuit of which you make wherever you are going or wherever you have come from ; the great green meadow of the Savannah, where the hot sunshine burns and glares all day, where the moonlight lies at night like the quiet waters of an inland sea, and where, between sunlight and moonlight, the fireflies spin the mazes of their fairy dance ! It is a flat plain of pasture land lying immediately to the north of the town, backed by a spur of the northern range of mountains, with Government House and its wonderful gardens on one side of it and the Queen's Park Hotel on the other, and all about it, surrounded by gardens and half hidden by palms and flowering trees, the pleasant villas of the richer classes. It is the one great playground of Trinidad ; it is Hyde Park and Hurlingham and Ranelagh and Battersea Park all in one. It is the most familiar thing in the memory of any one who has ever been in Trinidad, whether as the tourist of a day or the resident of a lifetime—that great sheet of restful green shaded by clumps of giant trees, with the gorgeous valleys of Maraval and St. Ann's running up into the hills beyond it—the high, steep hills, clothed with cocoa to the top, and in February made splendid by that lovely satellite and companion tree of the cocoa, the bois immortel, which

all the year is green and stately until in February it flames into flowers of a hue between amber and orange, so that all the valleys and hills are on fire with colour.

I am writing still, you see, about the externals of Trinidad, for they are all that you see at first, and all that you are likely to see for many a day. Indeed, the ordinary tourist must have the strangest and most confused impression of the island. What he generally does on landing is to drive in an open carriage up to the Queen's Park Hotel in an ordinary straw hat and without an umbrella, in consequence of which he is so exhausted by the sun that he can only lie in a rocking-chair on the verandah, and mop his forehead, and sip an iced drink, and watch the herds of cows, troubled by the sun and the horseflies, chasing each other across the Savannah from one patch of shade to another. And then, having lunched and somewhat recovered, he will drive down into the town again and buy shells and beads and stuffed lizards and guava jelly at the Home Industries Association, and take the necessary number of snapshots of unlovely negroes carrying burdens on their heads. He will drive up to the Savannah again, and perhaps a little way up the Maraval valley and under the giant thickets of bamboo; and finally go back to the ship with the satisfactory sense of having 'done' Trinidad, and a curious mingled

impression of the hot-house at Kew Gardens and some White or other-coloured City for admission to which he has paid money at a turnstile.

It is, indeed, one of the charms of this island that it offers little or nothing to the ordinary tourist. It is a sealed book to him, a tantalising, impregnable thing—a thing which he may look upon but not approach. The scale of its beauty is so majestic that it cannot be applied to any of the little purposes for which most people seek beauty. The flowers that look so lovely in the distance cannot be cut or gathered—they are growing a hundred feet high on the tops of trees. Those valleys and clefts in the tree-clothed rock that promised such shade to wander in, those hills that would afford such views if one could climb them, cannot be wandered in nor climbed. The thickets are too close, the ground is too cumbered with a tangle of life and death in which decay and generation are processes rioting together. It is no environment for the tourist. He must keep to the little tracks and paths that man has made for his own use; indeed, he had better keep to his carriage. If he gets out and walks unguarded in the open, the sun will smite him; if he attempts to leave the beaten track and stray into the shade, many forms of affliction from insect and reptile and poisoned vegetable growth may await him; but in any case he will find that there is nothing to

see, nothing to pluck, nothing to collect and take away; nothing, in short, that a tourist wants. And there is nothing to be seen but a tangle of boughs over the primeval, neutral-coloured floor of vegetation dying, decaying, and springing; the scene has gone dark, and he must come out again and look at it from the outside, from a safe distance, when once more it blazes into a splendid beauty that cannot be approached or handled.

It is all a matter of scale and focus. To discover the secret of the island you must first get that focus, and not attempt to apply the scale with which one measures the beauty of the temperate climes. There is no such thing in Trinidad as that charm of an English walk, when in the course of half a mile you may wander through a copse, follow the bank of a stream, pass through an orchard, climb the shoulder of a down and lie there on the short sweet grass listening to the sheep cropping about you. You must take far more trouble than that. But if, as I was fortunate enough to do, you will in one day drive fifty miles over roads made, half made, and unmade, until you can drive no more, but must walk and stumble and slip over the clay of a narrowing trace, the ground rising against you and the virgin forest closing like a sea round you until your feet tread where hardly any man's have ever trod before, and your eyes look down on what few eyes, except those of birds and

beasts, have ever looked upon, you will find that the island has its own secret for you, and that there is a key which will unlock all its beauties.

It will give you nothing; but the seemingly formidable perils with which it guards its treasures are like the flames with which the god surrounded Brünnhilde on her rock—things of appearance only, that will not hurt you if you care enough to take the trouble to pass them. For Nature in Trinidad, which is the most feminine land I have ever seen, defends herself thus elaborately from your curiosity; but she will hardly ever attack you if your curiosity proves stronger than your fear.

III

THE PEOPLE OF THE ISLAND

BEFORE I take you any deeper into Trinidad it will be as well to give some account of how its population, now close on four hundred thousand, is made up. The first thing one has to grasp and remember is that there is no true native race here or anywhere in the West Indies. For these are islands without a people of their own, inhabited by aliens, nourishing foreigners and strangers. Although the business of birth goes on here as busily as anywhere else, the people who are born are not the island's own people. They have all departed —departed in that dreadful wave of blood and cruelty that swept over all the West Indies in the early days of the Spanish occupation, when the native races, gentle, fine-tempered and innocent, were enslaved and then exterminated in the process of a colonisation in which the cross and the sword were never separated. What exactly these original inhabitants were is not certainly known ; but from the facial characteristics that can still be observed in a few remote districts of Trinidad and other islands

where some traces of the original stock remain, it would appear that they were of a Mongolian type, which had crossed over from the mainland and gradually spread among the islands. Their place is now occupied by the African negro, who takes kindly to any land where there is sun enough and soil enough to make life pleasant and easy; and to all intents and purposes he is now the native of the West Indies.

But in Trinidad another and more interesting and human element is present in the large coolie population, imported under indentures to supplement the negro population and share with them the agricultural labour for which in that climate white men are totally unfitted. There is a labouring population in Trinidad of some three hundred thousand, and of these about one half are East Indians. The colony has agents in India, and every year one or two shiploads are collected and despatched to Trinidad. They first spend a few days in the pleasant, leafy quarantine island in the Bay, where they are medically examined and allotted to the various planters who have applied for their services. In making the allotments due regard is paid to their own wishes as to association; families and relations and friends coming from the same village in India are sent together to the same estate in Trinidad. Thus little pieces of India are established there, with villages and rude temples half hidden in the shade of

the cocoa plantations; so that in this new foreign world the time for which they have contracted passes pleasantly enough. And the strangers, with their handsome faces, spare, lithe forms, and gay and beautiful attire, add colour and charm to human life there, and temper the crude barbarities of negro life with the dignities of an ancient civilisation. In the hills the negroes alone are strong enough for the severe labour that is necessary where the cocoa is planted on steep slopes and high, mountainous ground; but on the low and level lands the coolies do well, and under an intelligent and protecting Government live at peace and save money. Some of them settle in the island, many remain far longer than the original period of their indenture; and most of those who return to India return rich, to live out the remainder of their lives in a land where Trinidad is nothing but a dream and a memory.

I shall have more to say about the coloured population of the island; in the meantime there is something to be observed about the whites. Trinidad is a fine example of the ascendancy of minorities. At least three-fourths of the population of the island are blacks; they naturally are at the bottom of the scale and do the work of the land. Of the remaining whites, the great majority are of Spanish and French blood; they are the planters, the owners of estates, the inheritors of the island wealth. In absolute minority are the

English, who are nevertheless the predominant and governing race; and last of all comes the Crown, represented by the Governor and a handful of expert officials; the officials govern the island and all that it contains; and to the English Crown, the minority of one, belongs the whole. Here you have a Crown Colony in its purest form, and it would not be easy to find a better example of such government than is afforded by Trinidad. No doubt the natural wealth of the island helps in the smooth running of the machine: plenty of money is forthcoming for improvement and development; the country supports itself; but the form of government has undoubtedly much to do with the efficient way in which things are managed. The minimum of time is wasted in talk and debate. The island is governed by an extremely small Executive Council consisting of half a dozen officials who have no axes to grind, but are concerned merely with the efficient running of their own departments; and even the Legislative Council, the advising body, consists only of nominated members. There is no election, and its members are thus all directly representative of the governing power. And in Trinidad, you must remember, you have a population most wisely anxious not to govern themselves but to be efficiently governed—one of the rights and privileges of man which in these days is too often lost sight of. The agrieultural East Indian has no political ambitions; even the educated negro,

to do him justice, prefers to get his governing done for him by people of experience and competence in that capacity ; and the French and Spanish Creoles have too long breathed that languid air, have learned too thoroughly the lesson of the burning sun, to put themselves about over a task which the strangely energetic English are willing to perform. And in spite of what you may sometimes hear to the contrary, every one is really satisfied.

I have used the word ' Creole ' ; and as I shall have a good deal to say about the Creoles I had better begin by presuming on the part of at least some among my readers the usual degree of ignorance as to the exact meaning of that word. To the average Englishman I imagine it conjures up a vision of a dark and beautiful woman gloriously apparelled, and with a large proportion of coloured blood in her veins. It is necessary to get that idea out of one's head at the very beginning, as it is a wholly mistaken one. The first and essential claim to the title of Creole is that one should be of the purest European blood ; the second, as far as the West Indies are concerned, is that one should be a native of the islands. If Queen Alexandra had happened to be in Trinidad when her eldest son was born, King George would be a Creole. The word simply applies to two things—parentage and birth. You may be an English Creole, a French Creole, or a Spanish Creole ; but you cannot be a Creole if you

are born in England or France or Spain, even though your ancestors had been born and bred in the West Indies for generations. The one thing which is impossible in a true Creole is exactly what the ignorant think the word implies—that is, the least suggestion of negro blood. Please remember, then, that the true Creoles are as white as you are, and that those of the upper classes have nearly all been educated in France or England ; and that if you meet one in a London drawing-room, and expect veils and nose-rings and a jangle of barbaric jewels, you will be grievously disappointed. They are just ordinary ladies and gentlemen, a little paler than you because, living in the tropics, they have not been so much under the open sky ; citizens also of the British Empire, and loyal subjects of King George, although sometimes they can only speak French or Spanish.

The French Creoles, who are in the majority, are indeed the typical inhabitants of Trinidad. They seem more characteristic of it, of its beauty and isolation and charm, than any of the other groups. But for their religion they would have almost all the characteristics of the French ; but the faith which enshrines and preserves so many qualities that but for its protection would not withstand the alterative action of time and place preserves in them traces of their original country. Of course they speak French perfectly and, among themselves,

habitually; but then they speak English also perfectly, and with the accent of the colonial English; most of them are, in fact, naturally bilingual. They are thus typical of the strange harmonious confusion of races that exists in the island; of a foreign people, of an alien religion, and thinking their thoughts in a foreign language, they are yet entirely English in sympathy, and sometimes more English than the English. By that I do not mean that they are Anglo-maniacs, as certain Americans are; that is an entirely foreign attitude; they are English with a quiet sense of possession, of inheritance, of secure understanding which, when one comes to think of it, is strange enough. And as far as their ways are not our ways nor their thoughts our thoughts is only so far as the East is from the West, or, rather, as London is from Port-of-Spain. And that is about three thousand five hundred miles; or, measured another way, they are two thousand five hundred miles nearer the sun than we are; or, measured still another way, they lie some fourteen days of time away from us; and it is these things, as much as race and religion, that make communities of people different from one another, even though in heart and mind they are woven into the same bond of brotherhood.

IV

ISLAND FORTUNES

THERE are many pleasant ways of making your fortune in Trinidad. The foundation of all is cocoa. You have but to throw that green mantle over the hills and valleys of the island to take from under it, as from beneath a conjurer's cloth, anything between a living and a fortune. But cocoa is not the only thing. The great central plain of the island is devoted to the cultivation of sugar, and that, although it is not exactly profitable at the moment, may at any time, by a turn in prices, an alteration in some manufacture, or a little juggling with tariffs, become so valuable as to turn all these miles of green into miles of gold. Another way is to plant coconut trees, which cost nothing except for the labour of planting, and then sit down and watch them grow until in a year or two a harvest of wealth clusters about their crowns. While I was in Trinidad some one got an order from America for a million coconuts; and all he has to do is to knock them down from his trees and roll them into the holds of the ships that come to

take them. In such minor industries the profits to be realised are out of all proportion to the modest capital which has to be invested; but you cannot do it from a London office. You cannot even get it done for you; you must do it yourself. You must be the capitalist, you the planter, you the salesman, you the exiled waiter and watcher out there in the sunshine, if you would also be the beneficiary and reaper of these rich rewards.

It is the same with cocoa; the profits on a small, carefully managed cocoa estate range anywhere between ten and fifty per cent. on the capital expended; more than that sometimes; but no one, I imagine, has yet devised a plan whereby these profits can be realised by the mere capitalist. If you buy a cocoa estate and put a manager to work it, some one no doubt will make the twenty per cent.—but not you. The large profits come to the man who lives on his estate, who walks daily through the dark leafage, watches the ripening pods that glow like lamps shading from crimson through orange and amber to the palest yellow; who marks this tree, doctors that one, condemns that other to death; studies questions of drainage and shade, who watches over his black gang of labourers, and passes his life very largely in solitude, listening day by day to the dragging rhythm of the coolie's footsteps on the roof of the cocoa-house, where hour by hour he moves backwards and

forwards making tracks with his feet in the red-brown beans that are spread out to dry in the sun. In one way a cocoa estate is an ideal lazy man's occupation. If you have a well-established estate, it will go on for years with little or no attention. The cocoa-tree bears three times a year, and the trees all at different times, so that there is always a harvest to be gathered ; when you want money, or when the market is high, you pick your cocoa ; when the market is low, or you are in funds, you may leave it on the trees, or at the worst dry it and keep it for a better day. What little the sun and the soil will not do, the niggers and coolies do for you. You live in beautiful surroundings, and there is a fascination about a cocoa estate that grows and grows upon a man until to take a walk through the cocoa becomes his highest material, and to talk cocoa his deepest spiritual, pleasure. You may live in that lazy way, live perhaps pleasantly and sufficiently, but you will not be likely nowadays to make a fortune. That remains for the younger generation of planters who are discovering that a cocoa crop is not a miracle, but an event governed by natural laws the working of which may be helped or hindered by the application of other natural laws. The Government has founded a scientific Department of Agriculture, the object of which is to discover these natural laws and encourage their application,

and the result of its work is already to be seen. Some of the older Spanish planters, whose vast estates have been allowed to run wild, and which still nevertheless remain like mines out of which money can be dug at need, are a little superior to the new method. What has been since the beginning is good enough for to-day, and for that long sunny to-morrow that always smiles before Spanish eyes. But the French and English planters are learning their lesson; elaborate networks of drainage, such as the older generation would have scoffed at, now intersect their estates; the oldest traditions and beliefs are being examined and questioned; so that you will hardly travel in the train from Port-of-Spain to Arima without hearing a discussion as to whether after all the bois immortel is really the best shade for cocoa. I know nothing of the science of the matter, but on æsthetic grounds I should be sorry indeed if the bois immortel, or 'madre de cacao' as the Spaniards call it, ever ceases to be planted. It is the glory of the island. You see nothing of it, as you walk among the cocoa, but the long straight stems, like those of an ash tree, planted some thirty yards apart, with the cocoa trees looking like nut trees in between. But go away to another hillside, or travel some long glaring miles on the white road, and then look back at the place you have left; and you behold a sea of tree-tops

billowing away to the farthest sky-line and covered with a glory of orange and vermilion flowers. This lovely mother of the cocoa (*Erythrina umbrosa* in a more stately language) shades its children all day long in the fierce heat of the sun, collects in its broad leaves the morning and evening dew which keeps the ground moist about them, and, when it dies its vernal death, dies in a glorious shower of flame-coloured petals that enrich the soil and are the life of the young cocoa to be.

And, like these immortels, everything about the cocoa is beautiful. If a boundary has to be marked off, it is not done by ugly wire or fences of wood and stone, but stalks of croton are thrust into the ground to take root and send forth perennially the broad autumn-coloured leaves which contrast so well with the deep green of the undergrowth that no other boundary-mark is necessary. And if a newly planted tree has to be marked so that the sickle will spare it when the rank weeds about it are being cleared, a stem of our common hot-house datura is put in to mark the spot, which it advertises not only by its white flower but by the delicious perfume it spreads on the air around it. And what can be more lovely than the cocoa itself ? Its fruit is a spheroid pod as big as a large pear that grows, each pod on its little stem, straight out of the trunk of the tree. They look like frail Chinese lanterns lighting the dim grove, but if you try to

cut one open with a pocket-knife you will be reminded that all beauty is not necessarily frail. The shell is hard and tough, and it takes a sharp blow of the cutlass to split it open and reveal the milky interior wherein nestle the beans, the wealth of the cocoa-tree. But there are no more processes except to collect and dry the beans and to spread them in the sun on the roof of a house, to be stirred and turned by the lazy feet of some coolie with his rhythmical sentry-go ; then there is nothing more to do but to put them into bags and send them to the market.

The finance of the old cocoa estates is extremely interesting, although I am the last person in the world to understand it. But where a family, originally owning a great estate, has grown and spread in the island and branched into other families, all still living on the income of the original estate, it becomes involved in a tangle of mortgages, liens, charges, assignments and insurances for the unravelling of which a special accountant's department would need to be provided. Half the estates are mortgaged because money has had to be raised when the price of cocoa was low ; but the easy-going Creoles, instead of paying off some of the mortgage when the price of cocoa is high, take holidays to Europe and leave the estate still encumbered. Some people, indeed, have cocoa estates who have never had any money

at all. They seem to have acquired estates by the simple process of mortgage, and have lived more or less magnificently ever since. For Trinidad is an island of credit. No one with a cocoa estate thinks of paying for anything, although there is never, even among those Creole families which are financially in the deepest waters, any evidence of a shortage of actual cash. To me this is a great and excellent mystery. I can understand such people having no difficulty in getting credit for a hundred pounds' worth of goods, but I do not understand how they come by the five- and ten-pound notes which furnish them with necessary small change. But the small change is always there, apparently; the Creoles are most hospitable people, with that fine, lavish instinct which decrees that in matters of hospitality a thing that is done at all must be done as well as possible. They will entertain you royally on the brink of doom. Every now and then, of course, there is a crash; you hear that some family has become bankrupt. And that apparently relieves the tension, for the next thing you hear of them is that they are building themselves a new house, and that the daughters are going for a year to Europe. The truth is that there is such wealth in Trinidad, and money comes so easily and quickly when it comes at all, that these accidents are brief in their duration and light in their effects, like the sudden

storm of wind and rain that swoops down over the mountains and lashes the earth, setting the great feathery plumes of the royal palms waving and tossing in the upper air; and passes again as quickly as it came, leaving the world to sleep again in the sunshine.

But cocoa, as I said, is not the only thing, nor perhaps the greatest source of wealth. There is hardly any precious crop that will not grow there, and grow abundantly. Rubber is being planted on the cocoa estates, and many a mile of honest cocoa is being cleared and planted with doubtful rubber. Still, if you really want to grow rubber, and not merely to buy or sell rubber which is not in existence, here is the soil for it. And there is the pitch lake—of all the means of getting wealth for nothing assuredly the most absurdly simple in the world. It is a great bottomless deposit in the south-western corner of the island consisting of nothing more nor less than the asphalte with which streets are paved. The lake is inexhaustible; if you set a thousand men to dig a hole in it to-day the hole would be filled up to-morrow; there is an endless railway of buckets from the lake to the wharf two miles away; and hour after hour, day after day, the pitch pours into the holds of steamers to be sold at a great price—a process which can apparently go on for centuries without interruption. And last, but not least, in the same

part of the island oil has now been discovered in apparently limitless quantities, and American capital is pouring into the island to acquire and work the oil wells. It is all held independently of the Oil Trust, and the Government has reserved a right to take the whole or any part of the oil for itself at the market price at any time when it may be required; so that in this little island alone a fuel supply for our Navy in any time of war is absolutely secure.

These are the gross material facts, the economic foundation on which this superstructure of magic beauty rests. But it is strange to me that it has been left to the Americans to discover that Trinidad is now and in the immediate future likely to afford some of the most valuable investments in the world.

V

QUAM DILECTA

TWICE in every twenty-four hours the mere act of living and breathing in the Tropics is sheer delight and luxury—just after sunrise and just after sunset. Your awakening brings with it a sense of refreshment, for from the great reservoirs of the sky the atmosphere seems to be renewed just before dawn, and you breathe an air changed to a delicious coolness. The routine of daily life begins between six and seven with this sensation of atmospheric renewal, and you turn from the close darkness of the night with a sense of relief and of expectancy to the light and colour that the day will hold. Now is the hour, almost the only hour, that tempts you to physical activity; it is the time to walk, or, best of all, to ride. The shadows of the palms are still long as you turn out of your gate and trot off in the direction of the Savannah, for the early morning canter on the Savannah is an experience not to be missed and not to be forgotten. The grass is still cool and dewy, the sun only pleasantly hot, and the trade

breeze, which has awakened in the upper air, is beginning to roll its chariot of white clouds above the peaks of the northern hills. There are not many people about, but most of them you know—the park-keeper who opens the gate for you, the loafing and smiling nigger, an acquaintance or friend here and there to be greeted and perhaps accompanied on a canter round the racecourse. Children and nursemaids are out for their morning airing on the Pitch Walk. The red electric tram that skirts the Savannah and plies between the town and entrance to the St. Ann's Valley begins to be busy, and the clash of its bell and the drone of its trolley on the wire mingle with the few other morning sounds.

But every moment the sun is getting hotter, and when your canter is over you turn away to take the road up one of the valleys where the great bamboos span the way and keep it shaded and cool. Beautiful winding, climbing roads, lovely green living things all about you and above you, clear talking music of a little river leaping down to drown itself, at this dry season, in the hot sands of the plain, but as yet cool and sparkling and all unconscious of the suffocation that awaits it—these are pleasures most real and memorable. There are few birds to be seen, fewer still to be heard, for, like the insects, they fall silent when the sun comes up, and only take their part in the

great tropical symphony when night falls; but the 'qu'est-ce qu'il dit?' calls from a tree, and the little gem-like honey-bird darts among the scarlet flowers. And far above you, striking gloriously on the green tree-tops, is the mounting sun; and although you are roofed in by the kindly leafage from those searching rays you can tell by the steaming air that begins to rise about you that the tremendous force is already at work.

For it is one of the great disadvantages of tropical life that you fear the sun; its power, which is with us so beneficent, to which we so gladly entrust ourselves, is here malignant; you must hide from it, and you grow cunning in avoiding even momentary exposure to its direct rays. Even in the early morning, and while it is still low, it begins to be mischievous, for the level rays, getting under the brim of your helmet, may strike on the back of your neck with unpleasant results. This radiant malignity is a very mysterious and a rather terrible thing. It is not that the actual sensation of heat is insupportable; often it is quite pleasant for a little while; but if you stand about for a few minutes in the full glare of the sun, although you will have no overpowering sensations of heat, you will almost certainly in a few minutes experience a sensation of exhaustion and depression. The finger of the sun has touched you, and you feel that virtue has gone out of you,

and it will take you perhaps an hour to recover from the touch.

When you come back from your ride, say at nine o'clock, it is already very hot, and before you bathe it is necessary to cool down, which you pleasantly do with the help of a coconut julep—a long drink of coconut water with perhaps a flavouring of lime and a large lump of ice. And then you go for your bath to a stone bath-house where the water brims five feet deep in a great pit of coolness, in which you lie and float for half-an-hour; and then you go and dress in the white flannel or drill of the tropics and begin the lazy part of the day. That is if you are an idler; if not, you drive down to your office and there behave exactly as if you were in England—except that you work harder. The Government officials in Trinidad all keep English office hours, not because such hours are in the least suitable to the climate or the life, but because the work cannot be got through with any other arrangement. A few miles across on the Venezuelan mainland, in exactly the same climate and temperature, every one ceases from even a pretence of work between the hours of twelve and three; the shops and offices are shut, the trams stand idle, all the world goes to bed, and even if you rang any one up on the telephone you would probably get no reply from the exchange. But in Trinidad they work through the hottest

part of the day, and although you hear very little talk or complaint about it, it is a terribly trying condition for work.

At half-past eleven comes the first meal of the day—the déjeuner of bourgeois France, here universally called breakfast. It is a large and substantial meal, and on the menu will probably figure some special island dishes—the tiny little oysters, the most delicious I have tasted anywhere in the world, which cluster on the branches of the trees that dip into the tideless waters of the Caribbean; or crab-back, the highly seasoned contents of a land-crab served in its own shell; or lap or agouti or the excellent land-turtle; or a pelau; or wild duck, or some other of the tropical game birds. If you are wise you will flavour almost everything with a squeeze of lime, and you will end your banquet with one or other of the countless island fruits that look so beautiful and, I must confess, seldom taste nearly so good as they look. In return for the colour and size that the sun and the earth give you in the tropics you must make a sacrifice of other advantages. The flowers are gorgeous in hue and form and variety, but few of them have any perfume; the birds are amazing and gaudy in plumage, but they have no song, or at the best harsh and screaming voices; the fruits are beautiful to look upon and of infinite variety, but with a few exceptions they

have little flavour. If it were otherwise, if everything in the tropics were as good as it is beautiful, if all the senses of man could be gratified as the sense of sight is gratified, then this would be Paradise indeed, and the great nations of the world would fight for possession of it. But it is not Paradise : it is only Trinidad, a place with some advantages and some disadvantages; infinitely beautiful, but hardly giving one the impression of having been specially designed for the habitation of man. It is a home and paradise of insects and butterflies and flying and creeping things innumerable ; for man it is a place of sojourn and of effort, where wild nature, on too great a scale for man, will close in upon him and overwhelm him unless he makes constant and untiring warfare against it.

After breakfast you sit for a while on the gallery, as the verandah is here called, and keep a wary eye and ear open for mosquitoes. Then if you are a worker you resume your work ; or if you are an idler you continue your idleness, and read or doze in a long chair or hammock ; for the heat has now become formidable and you cannot move a finger without being aware of it in every pore of your skin. The Creole habit is to go to bed from two to half-past three or four, and unless you have anything very definite to do it is the wisest plan. In Port-of-Spain, at any rate, the world,

excepting the world within the walls of offices, is asleep; there is nothing to be done and no one to be seen.

But at four there is a return to life. Then the men come home from their work, and there is golf on the Savannah; the ladies put on their smartest frocks and go out driving or calling; the clubs begin to fill up by about five, and if you are fortunate enough to belong to the Savannah Club —an exclusive and chiefly official coterie of fifty members, who meet in a charming house by the Savannah for bridge or billiards or baccarat— you will be certain to turn in there some time in the afternoon. And after that Port-of-Spain is fortunate enough to possess one of the most agreeable clubs in the world—a mixed club for ladies and gentlemen where may be found all outdoor and indoor amusements, and where you can meet on neutral ground your enemies as well as your friends. And then come cocktails. The cocktails deserve a chapter to themselves—those delicious, rose-coloured, foam-crowned swizzles of Trinidad, with their almost magically refreshing effect after the long heat of the day—ah! I could write an article about the drinks of Trinidad, and would too, if I had any hope that the inhabitants of a northern world like ours would deem my words anything more than the ravings of a dipsomaniac. No; there is one secret about

Trinidad which I shall never tell, which if it were known would send people flocking there by the thousand and make the island the most fashionable place in the world. But the world will never know it, not because it cannot hear, but because, foolish world ! it would not believe.

And as the sun goes down and the darkness falls and the six o'clock beetle punctually begins his long, shrill note, and the fireflies, those fairies of the dusk, light their green-gold lamps and begin to dance among the trees, people gather round the bridge tables or sit in groups on the cool verandah ; or perhaps (since the Creoles are born dancers) some one goes to the piano and sets a whole roomful of people waltzing with the fireflies. The heat declines ; the perfumes of the evening, of the flowers that open and live and die in the darkness of one night, float out from the gardens ; and in music and dinner and talk and dancing the day comes to an end. And man lays him down and sleeps ; but the birds of the air, the beasts of the field and forest, the host of flying and creeping things, reptiles and insects, wake and lift up their hearts, and to the star-dusted sky, in a chorus of whistling, piping, barking, croaking, booming, drumming, shrilling voices, hymn their strange loves.

VI

ISLAND LORE

I HAVE said that Trinidad is an island without a people of its own; but at least it may be said to have a language of its own in the patois that is spoken throughout the country districts—a patois deriving equally from the French and Spanish languages, easy enough to follow if it is written down, but quite impossible for the stranger to understand when it is spoken in the rough, gabbling voice of the negro. In this strange tongue is enshrined such philosophy as the island boasts—a philosophy containing chiefly proverbs and fables, many of which are derived from the common stock of human philosophy, but some of which are, I think, original and peculiar to the place. For example, the familiar saying that 'What the eye does not see the heart does not grieve at' is found in a Creole form as 'Sah xeay pah weh, cher pah kah feh mal'; but I do not know any European parallel to 'Duvant chen say misshay chen, dehyeh chen say chen,' which being translated means 'In dog's presence he is Mr. Dog, behind his back he is dog.' There is of

course no patent in wisdom, and the only form of originality possible consists in the metaphor in which the thought is clothed. In Trinidad the images are all of a very homely kind, and are suggested by such natural facts as are most apparent; the crapaud, or frog, whose voice fills the valleys in the evening, figures in a great many of them; and the monkey and the lizard and the crocodile and the fowl and the cockroach are all freely used in homely illustration of the island philosophy. The difficulty of arriving at a nice discrimination between sufficient activity and fussiness is expressed in the saying: 'If a crab does not walk he does not get fat; if he walks too much he falls into the pot' ('Se crab pah mahshay le pah grah; le mahshay trop le tombay nan showdeah'). The monkey naturally lends himself freely to the purposes of proverb-making: 'The monkey will never admit that its child is ugly' ('Mackack pah jamay kah de eiehe le led'); 'It is trouble that makes the monkey eat pepper' ('Say mesaire ke feh mackack manjay pemah'); 'The monkey knows which tree to climb' ('Mackack connet ke bwah le kah montay') —and so on. There is a direct connection between elementary observation and thought, between the sights and sounds of everyday life and that deductive process by which we arrive at general principles, which is aptly illustrated in the little proverb 'Say lang crapo, ke kah trahe crapo' ('It

is the frog's own tongue that betrays him '). One can almost see the process there in Trinidad, where there are two unfailing sounds that herald the coming of light—the sudden, shrill and continuous note of the beetle, the punctuality of which has earned for its maker the title of 'the six-o'clock beetle,' and the loud chorus of the frogs which at the same hour begins to rise from the ground about the watercourses. I have often heard bull-frogs before, but I have never heard such a volume of sound as that which comes from the Trinidad crapaud. And all day long he is invisible, you would never suspect his presence; but at the coming of dusk this chorus of mighty voices, more like the barking of great dogs than the utterance of little reptiles, breaks out to remind you of their existence by the thousand. The primitive negro, aware of this phenomenon night after night, begins to notice a discrepancy between the loud arresting voices and the almost invisible mud-coloured bodies; but for his own loud voice the frog would remain undiscovered. And from the observation of that to its application to other negroes, who in some otherwise cunning piece of deception give themselves away by the exhibition of some easily recognisable characteristic, is a short mental step; but its further application to the eternal law of life which places within ourselves the real cause and origin of what we call our destiny is a longer flight,

probably never contemplated by the man who first said ' Say lang crapo, ke kah trahe crapo.'

It is to be remembered that, although one calls these Creole proverbs, most of them have probably originated with the native negro population, who have known no other world and no other life than the world and life of their own island. Some of them are obviously adaptations of proverbs that have come from a wider world and an older civilisation ; for example, this one—' Ce crapo de ou kimah tinee mal zea, queh le ' (' If the frog tells you that the crocodile has sore eyes, believe him '). It is a little far-fetched and obscure ; it lacks the spontaneity and evidence of direct observation that mark the other animal proverbs ; it is ambiguous and might mean several things. In fact, I am not by any means certain of what it does mean, unless it is a clumsy way of saying that you need not worry about a small improbability in the face of a large impossibility. But it is obviously a local adaptation of a foreign proverb.

In a land of plenty one does not expect to find many proverbs connected with hunger, and I could hear of only two, which apply to momentary hunger rather than permanent want ; they are both rather terse and humorous, and more epigrammatic in form than usual—' Bouden pah tinne zoreale ' (' The belly has no ears ') and ' Dant pah kah portay deay ' (' Teeth don't wear mourning '). And there

is one which I like extremely—'Gresse pah tinne santemah,' the English of which is 'Fat has no sentiment.' But the tersest of all is one which expresses a world-wide experience, and is one of the most compact proverbs that I know—'Mariay tini dents,' or 'Marriage has teeth.' It may not be the last word on marriage, but it is certainly the briefest.

The folk lore of the island is based on the ordinary superstitions of negroes the world over, and on the belief in 'jumbies,' the negro name for fairies or monsters of any kind, and one or two other hybrid supernatural beings which seem to be indigenous to the island. The most interesting of these, and to me one of the most eerie inventions of the human mind, is the 'Diabless' or she-devil, the product originally no doubt of surfeit, indigestion and nightmare; her chief quality is the power to increase her stature to an infinite size. She has no particular object to pursue except apparently the mischievous one of frightening people to death. She is usually encountered late at night, when some belated traveller, walking home along the lonely road, will hear footsteps behind him. Turning round to look, he sees a woman following him at some distance. As the footsteps draw near he turns again to look, and finds that she has apparently increased in size. He hurries on, but as the footsteps begin to overtake him he looks back again and finds that the woman has grown to a giantess of three or four times his

stature. He begins to run, and the footsteps behind him hasten also; an immense shadow falls before him on the road; and as he rushes headlong away it momentarily increases in stature, until, as he rushes into his house and bangs the door, a hideous face with burning eyes looks in at him from the skylight of his house, uttering a loud crackling laugh and shouting 'Ou tini bonheur!' which means 'You are luckly!'—a piece of irony, apparently. The diablcss takes other forms. Some good-natured person, returning home late at night, finds a little child sitting by the roadside weeping bitterly. He goes up to comfort it, and at last from its sobbing utterance he gathers that it has lost its way and wishes to be taken home. With much trouble he finds out where it lives and lifts it on to his shoulder. The child seems to grow heavier, and as he walks on the impression deepens in him that his burden has grown not only heavier but larger; he puts this down to some hallucination of his own—the result of conviviality—and staggers on, perspiring under his load. He reaches the house which the child described, but finds that it is the wrong one, and goes on to another address indicated by the wailing infant, who is still growing heavier at every step. Again the house proves not to be the right one, and again, half suspicious, half bewildered, he goes on to find it; but the child grows heavier and heavier and larger and larger until in a paroxysm of fury and

exhaustion he hurls it to the ground, when it immediately swells to five or six times its size and towers over him, utters its hoarse crackling laugh and formula of 'You are lucky!' and disappears. There are other monsters, such as the 'Soucouyan' —a creature which has the power of taking its skin off and of flying through the air and through keyholes without it, with most unpleasant results; this monster is of the vampire species, and can only be prevented from draining one's blood if one sprinkles the floor round one's bed with rice, every grain of which it is obliged to eat separately before it can turn its attention to the victim. And there is the 'Duaine,' an unpleasant little dwarf spirit, the ghost of unchristened babies, which wanders wailing about lonely places at night and lures the inquisitive traveller after it into the forest, where it drowns him in a pool.

There is still a certain amount of Obeah undoubtedly practised in Trinidad, though, of course, its power does not withstand the advance of education; nevertheless there are occasional obscure crimes which, if they cannot be traced directly to Obeah, justify the strongest suspicion as to their origin. But it is practically impossible for a white man, and certainly for a stranger, to find out anything about it. It is hard enough to get authentic material even in South America, although in New Orleans certainly the Obeah is still at work; but as

its headquarters are in Hayti, and as that hideous and sinister community is practically closed to white men, it is not likely that much will ever be known of it until the day when it has become practically extinct. Which day let every white man earnestly and devoutly wish to hasten ; for of all the desolate and gloomy contrivances by which man, and even black man, has endeavoured to degrade himself, this crude and hideous religion appears to be the most terrible. Certainly in the West Indies we are sweeping it away with our broom of negro education ; although what else we may be sweeping up for ourselves in the process is a thing which not I nor any one else can as yet foretell.

VII

THE FOREST

LET me recall it step by step—that long and toilsome approach to the centre of the island, earth's holy of holies, the heart of the world; the setting out in the dim cool morning, the long two hours' journey by train in the increasing heat, the long drive, the walk that became a panting struggle and scramble, and then suddenly the towering green wall of the primeval forest, with its twilight, its silence and its mystery. It would be less wonderful, or rather the mind would be less prepared to realise its wonder, if it were easier of access; and that long and difficult journey was worth the taking, not only for itself, but for what it added to the end.

The railway that runs along the west coast of Trinidad and sends branches into the principal valleys has a life of its own. Every station is a centre, with its crowd of smiling loafing negroes, its waiting array of ramshackle buggies, its exchange of news and gossip. Between the stations the train runs through endless greenery, now

through mangrove swamps, now beside cocoa plantations, and now across the great alluvial plain where for miles and miles the sugar waves its giant grasses twelve feet high. And on your right as you go south is always the smooth sea shimmering in the heat—that pale Gulf of Paria, muddy and grey with the silt of the Orinoco and the soil of the Andes. There is no sea-beach here or shore as we know it; there is no scour of tide or storm; the gentle waters, smoking in the heat, wash against the very soil like the waters of a pond, and the bright green mangrove bushes lean and dip themselves in the warm sea. Far away to the south in the trembling haze a few palms break the horizon; the refraction makes the shore invisible, and their heads seem to be floating in the quaking air between sky and sea.

And now you arrive at the end of your first stage and get into a buggy and drive off along the firm white road—for the roads are the veins and arteries of the island, and they have to be many and good. And you drive away and away, first through the sugar with its monotonous green rolling sea of grasses, and then, as you get on to the higher ground, through cocoa. Here and there by the roadside are the clearings where the coolies live in their dainty little houses made of poles and twigs and leaves—mere shelters from the sun and the rain, for their real life is lived out

of doors. Beautiful little naked brown children, with shock-heads of black hair and the loveliest and most mischievous of black eyes, stare at you as you drive by; lithe-limbed brown men, handsome and refined in mould and feature, salaam to you from under the trees; graceful native women with a wealth of fine gold on their arms and ankles and in their ears and noses, wrapped and draped most beautifully in a length of some rose- or saffron-coloured fabric, pass you on the road with that inimitable grace of movement of which the East Indian women seem to have the secret. And then the metalled road gives place to one the surface of which is made of burnt clay; for stone is scarce and the quarries far away, and it has been necessary to find and open a new quarry and to drive a new road to it through the virgin forest. And presently the clay road gives place to a corduroy road, which is made of logs of wood set crosswise like railway sleepers close together; the sun climbs higher and higher and shines hotter and hotter; and the scarlet and golden pods of the cocoa on either side seem to be glowing with red and white heat. Sometimes, where the road tops a rise, you can see the forest in the distance, the green sea of the tree-tops broken with varied colour—now the purple of the angelim, now the silver of the balata, now the gold of the poui or the terra-cotta of the bois immortel. But you are not there yet. For

when perhaps a score of miles of this stifling and bone-shaking drive has been accomplished you come to a point where even the buggy can go no more ; where the road runs into a cutting between soft clay banks and continues only as a mere track crossed with fallen trees and trampled by the bullocks that draw the loads of soil from cutting to embankment—a mere cleft in the green wall of the forest cut straight and true to the distant point where the quarry is. The next two miles are the hardest of all. With an umbrella held up in one hand against the pitiless heat that strikes downwards from the sky and upwards from the ground with the reverberation of a furnace, and in the other a staff cut for you from a forest tree, you slide and scramble over the slippery clay, until the road becomes a mere clearing, until the clearing becomes a track, and there is nothing to guide you but the cut trees which the road-tracer has cleared to mark the way. My companion at this point went on with one of his engineers to the quarry, but I chose to wait for him here. And as soon as he had gone on I turned aside, walked a few paces among the tree stems, and was lost in the primeval forest.

The first thing that struck me was the silence. There were none of those whisperings and buzzings and noises of bird or insect that one associates with the woodland of the North. Life there was, all

about one, a strenuous, tremendous natural force, a tide of sap rushing upwards; but it was silent life. Now and then a harsh scream from far above would rend the silence, like the sudden tearing of a sombre fabric; but even these sounds were rare. The shade and dimness were delightful after the glare of the sun, and yet the heat was stifling, for it was damp and heavy with the moist and enervating atmosphere of a hothouse. And the green had all gone, there was hardly a green thing to be seen; one seemed, in that submarine twilight, to be down among the elements of things, the mere rudimentary beginnings of things, like a man walking upon the floor of the sea. Huge stems like the columns of a cathedral crowded about one; trailing lianes and creepers, not green things, but brown ropes and wires and cables and knots and festoons, tangled themselves all about one's path; one would find oneself tripped up by long horizontal stems like gas-piping, but whence they came or whither they were leading it was impossible to tell. And as you looked up the great tree-stems, some of them with sides like the walls of a room, some slender like the masts of a ship, all joined themselves in perspective long before their green tops were visible. Two hundred feet above you those glorious heads were waving in the breeze, feeding on the sunshine, heads of every species, of every colour, bearing flowers and fruits that no

hand of man would ever touch. The air roots of a thousand creepers hung down their threads and roots and cords ; and the strangest parasites, lianes and orchids, wound and twisted themselves about the trees and about themselves and about each other, and round again about the tangle that was made up of the trees and themselves and each other, in a mad passionate struggle for foothold upon the great stairway to the sun.

There was no sign of death or decay here, and the absence of that at first startled one. Where are the waste and refuse of all this tremendous manufactory ? You look on the ground, on the mud-coloured floor of clay—it is tidy and clean as though it had been cleared by a gardener. There is nothing dead or rotten there, there is none of the rich bed of leaf-mould which you would find in an English woodland—nothing but the stark earth and the stark trees growing out of it. For the truth is that in this great power-house of Nature the energy is so tremendous and the processes are so rapid that a tree or a branch or a leaf that falls almost melts away ; it is dissolved so quickly, like an organic body in quick-lime, that it is reduced to its elements in a few weeks or days, and its original components set free to carry on anew the cycle of life.

At first there is something awful in this prodigality of strength and force, something monstrous in the

actual horse-power that is rushing upwards through those stems and tubes and roots around you; the universe seems to be a horror, a nightmare of chemical activities in which soul and spirit can have no place. But that mood passes, as you stand there amid wonders that exhaust your wonder and proportions that defy your conception; for you remember that you are seeing only one end, and that far, far above you, serene in the sunlight, this struggle for life, this orgy of vitalisation, turns to a glory, a peace and beauty not to be realised nor described. For centuries, perhaps, one of these growths, such as a Palmiste, will climb and climb and climb towards that world of sunlight; and, attaining it at last, break like a rocket into a glory of coloured stars that make them new homes and centres of life among the tree-tops, and look thereafter into the very face of the sun. Far away from you here the world of man also, with its strivings and discords, labours and rises and falls in sorrow and in pain; here one law rules, and in solitude and in peace earth and sun and air pursue their great business unhindered from generation to generation. In that hour of solitude in the virgin forest I thought of certain words of Carlyle: 'The universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel house with spectres; but godlike and my father's.'

VIII

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

IF I have dwelt chiefly on the bright side of things in Trinidad it it because that is the side which I saw and loved, and because on the whole I think the bright side is the more important. But a bright sun means dark shadows, and life in this tropical paradise has its seamy side, as they know well who live there. I have not dwelt on the obvious disadvantages of the climate, because I think they have been and are more than sufficiently emphasised by others; in fact they have been exaggerated, and the climate of Trinidad has got a worse name than it deserves. It is of course true that the combination of extreme heat and humidity which is found in Trinidad is enervating and trying to the system; it is true that such a climate is favourable to malarial and other fevers; it is true that the mosquito and his plaguing kindred abound and flourish in what are for them almost ideal conditions; it is true that yellow fever, that most terrible scourge of the Tropics, makes its appearance less rarely than some enthusiasts would have us believe. But these

are the inevitable disadvantages that set off some of the advantages I have described in other chapters. You cannot have everything in this world; you cannot have the most gorgeous and splendid tropical scenery, three of the most beautiful ranges of wooded hills in the world, and a soil that will grow a fortune for you in a year, without having corresponding drawbacks; but at least it is true of Trinidad to say that its disadvantages are the disadvantages of life everywhere in the Tropics, while its merits are entirely its own.

There is one way, however, in which I think Trinidad might improve itself, and that is in its social conditions. I speak of the sides of life that interest me most, and that I have studied most; and I think that the society of Trinidad might be one of the most charming communities in the world; but I do not think that its possibilities are at all realised. I have referred before to the three great divisions of society—the aristocracy, the general Creole society, and the governing colony. To begin with, these three classes do not mix as much as they might. A great deal of influence in this direction rests, or might rest, with the Governor, and the effect of a definite encouragement on his part of this admixture of the white population could not fail to be of great benefit. The island aristocracy is a very proud one; there are certain names in Trinidad which almost have the authority of letters patent; to be a

Peschier, Farfan, Cellier, de Boissière, de Verteuil, d'Abadie, Devenish, Knox, de Creny, Warner, de Laperouse, Leotaud, Lange or Maingot is to enjoy a social prestige which is quite independent of your worldly estate. These are names of old families in Trinidad, some of them still flourishing, and some almost extinct; but there are hundreds of other families, of names less distinguished, and yet really of similar interests and worldly estate, with whom they do not and will not mix. That is a disadvantage; and it brings in its train another of more serious effect on the social life of the island. I refer —and I do so with all diffidence and respect to a community in which I was most happily and hospitably entertained—to a certain narrowness of life that is common to almost all provincial and colonial societies, but which the racial and cosmopolitan advantages of Trinidad ought to be able to counteract. Bridge and dancing and horse-racing may be pleasant things, and are nowhere more pleasant than they are in Trinidad; but I think that even their most enthusiastic devotees would agree that they are not everything. The people of Trinidad are above the average in intelligence and wit; and they have the capacity for appreciating many of the cultivated sides of life which at present they do not touch. There is no theatre in Port-of-Spain; there is no music except such as is provided by the Government

and the spasmodic efforts of amateurs; consequently, however cultivated people's taste may be, there is no education in the drama or in music. And yet I should say that Trinidad has enormous musical possibilities; the negroes love music; rhythm is the very soul of their lives, and of their two great passions, the passion for rhythm and for colour, their sense of rhythm is as fine and true as their sense of colour is crude and false. There is no reason why there should not be a native orchestra in Port-of-Spain if only a few rich people would make up their minds that they wanted it. Another influence which also makes for this narrowness of social outlook is the lack of anything like literary interest. The island is extremely badly supplied with books; there is no encouragement for people either to buy or to read them, and the world's thought, the things that are really interesting and occupying their fellow-men and fellow-women in other countries, hardly affect the people of Trinidad. This is doubly a pity because books and literature can make one independent of time and place; they are what bind the world together, and enable us to live in communion with those who are geographically remote from us. A really well-organised library service of new books from England is an enterprise which ought to be established and fostered, and which would amply repay the efforts of any one public-spirited enough to undertake it.

These are simple things, but they would have a very far-reaching effect in broadening and deepening the social life of the island. At present, in the absence of outside interests, society tends to be driven in too much upon itself. The small doings of other people become of too great importance, and the bad habit of commenting upon them, and of ultimately finding the chief interest of conversation in such comment, is not one which tends to sweeten or elevate social life. It has other and greater effects besides; it tends to shift one's standard of conduct from its true centre within one's self, and to invest with an undue importance the opinion of other people on matters which should concern one's self alone. The ancient Virtue, or strength within one's self which determines one's conduct, thus gives place to a false and pinchbeck Respectability, or conformity to other people's opinion of what one's conduct ought to be. These are all tendencies rather than established faults, and it would be easy to exaggerate them. Certainly it is not necessary, for the Trinidadians have the faculty of seeing the beams in their own eyes, and tending to magnify rather than to minimise them. Just as I think the Barbadians, delightful people as they are, are inclined to believe that they are faultless, so I think that their neighbours in Trinidad are inclined to undervalue themselves, although both parties would probably deride the suggestion.

There remains one aspect of life which I can only touch on, although a book might be written about it alone—and that is the negro population and society, which, of course, greatly outnumbers the white in Port-of-Spain—a society with its problems, its aspirations, its virtues and its faults through which it is struggling to some degree of self-realisation. You will find the negro in almost every walk of life in Trinidad, from the lowest labour to the ranks of the Law and the Bar. Admirable servants, clerks and shop-assistants are these negroes; and it is wonderful to me how they have trained and adapted themselves to doing much of the necessary and important work of the community. The negro is naturally an idle, smiling fellow, who loves to sit in the sun and laugh the hours away. Organised, disciplined work does not come easily or naturally to him; and yet, as I say, the whole of the organised and disciplined work is performed by the negro, faithfully and efficiently. He aspires constantly and nobly to higher things, but how far beyond these middle regions his aspirations will be able to carry him the future only can decide. At his best the negro has a high ideal of service and renders it faithfully.

My final word is not an original one, but it is important. Among the conditions which tend to make life in a place like Trinidad less full and less real than it might be, the chief is the complete ab-

sence of a proper news-service from England. There is no direct cable, the telegraph rate is absurdly high, and such news of the world as reaches Trinidad filters through an American press agency, and is both trivial and untrustworthy. It is impossible to keep in touch with the world if you do not know what the world is doing; and the most loyal colony in existence cannot take an intelligent interest in its mother country or in the rest of the Empire unless it is supplied daily with trustworthy news of what is really happennig in the world. Proper and efficient news-service to the West Indian colonies is a thing which every intelligent person who has studied the subject has declared to be a necessity; but unless the Government takes it up, and either establishes it or assists private enterprise in doing so, the West Indies will still continue to be fed daily on scraps of the most trumpery and unveracious news. You cannot have a good newspaper without news, and what is wanted in Trinidad for press and people alike is some breeze flowing steadily in from the greater world to renew and invigorate their own atmosphere, which at present they are forced to breathe and re-breathe until it is exhausted.

THE TRUTH ABOUT JOHN DAVIDSON

THE TRUTH ABOUT JOHN DAVIDSON [1]

THE end of John Davidson is one of those events which should be made as painful for the world as possible, and the sore of which should be kept open by every possible means; and I make no apology for reverting to it in the pages of the *Saturday Review*, the writers and readers of which may be counted among the few who really care very much what happens to literature and those who make it in our country. I knew John Davidson well in these last years; saw the wretchedness and poverty and loneliness of his exiled life; spent long days with him in intimate and memorable companionship; and I knew well, for all his sanity and courage, to what gloomy bourne he was travelling. And it is in fulfilment of a compact made with him in one of those long and intimate talks that I now try to

[1] This was written in New York when the news of the recovery of John Davidson's body from the sea at Penzance (he had disappeared some weeks before) reached me. I have reprinted it at the request of several literary men who were good enough to comment upon it at the time and to extend its publicity.—F. Y.

get something said that ought to be said; that I hope has already been said, but that cannot be said too often.

The artist lives by two things: by his affections or emotions, and by the rebound of his expression from the world around him—recognition, appreciation. Keep those two channels full and flowing, and you get the best of which he is capable. Cut off one, and he may struggle lamely on; cut off both, and he perishes. Material success or failure matter very little beside them; but without them material success is empty and material failure is crushing. John Davidson had the misfortune to depend almost entirely on the second of these two things—recognition—for his spiritual life. He was essentially a lonely man, of an uncouth, ill-accommodating spirit, who had learned not to depend on his affections as a source of strength. He had learned that bitter lesson—to live alone; his affections were confined to the natural, domestic ties, marital and paternal: real and precious things to him as a human being, but alien from his poetic and artistic spirit. His work was literally everything to him. He lived and died singly for it, sacrificed everything to it. Because of it he chose for himself and his family bitter poverty and isolation where, had he chosen to use his splendid gifts in working to please others instead of himself, he might with his indefatigable industry

have earned enough to procure what would have been luxury for one of his simple tastes. He whittled down his personal needs to these: a roof to cover him, a sufficiency of the plainest kind of food to eat and tobacco to smoke.

That, literally, was his life latterly. Every morning he worked at his desk, tortured by the clamour of children who were sent out to yell in the slum behind his house; in the afternoon a walk alone, through the streets or roads of that Penzance which he loathed as his prison, and knew would be his grave; later, perhaps, a walk with his wife; reading in the public library; another lonely walk; and to bed. He had no money to make excursions, and no humour to make acquaintances. His dream was London, the streets and noises and roaring life-tide of London, the companionships and convivialities of London as he had once enjoyed them; his idea of luxury was to entertain a few friends to dinner at the Criterion Restaurant. All these were as far beyond him, a man who had devoted his life to delivering his message as a poet, as the Victoria Cross is beyond me. He lived in Penzance because his asthma made London fatal to him in the winter, because it was cheap, and because he had no equals there to make his poverty seem disgraceful to his wife, but for whose silent, loyal help this disaster would have happened long ago. In the sunshine of that

mild, dull place, with St. Michael's Mount appearing and disappearing in the mist, and the long Atlantic rollers breaking on the shallows of Mount's Bay, was fought out this grim, losing battle between the spirit of a poet and the conditions which the modern world provides for him.

There is so much cant and smug hypocrisy among even those who profess to care for things of the spirit, among those who style themselves 'men of letters,' that I am almost hopeless of driving my message home; and yet it is they who are really responsible for the dull misery of that long road of which this was the inevitable end. We make a great outcry about the lack of high talent, the rarity of a single artistic aim in our contemporary literature; we are always busy belauding those who have arrived, who have somehow weathered the indifference of the previous generation; what do we do to encourage those who, whether their work has the fortune to earn our complete critical approval or not, are really in earnest about it, who have the artist's passion to do a thing as well as they know how? Never mind about the buying public, which is entitled to buy what pleases it, and not to buy what does not please it; but what about the brotherhood of letters, which professes to know the difference between work done in the artist's spirit, and with the artist's passion, and work done to command a market? How has the

literary world, crying loudly for a real poet, treated John Davidson? He was a real poet, make no doubt of that; since Swinburne first discovered his poetry, and chanted it aloud to the delighted ears of young Davidson in the Professor's study in Glasgow thirty years ago, there has been no shadow of doubt among men capable of judging poetry. You may have hated his philosophy, deplored his anger and violence, criticised his blank verse, but he was a poet, and, that rarest of beings in the twentieth century, a man who chose starvation and poetry as a career rather than plenty and journalism.

I have read the chief reviews of John Davidson's books written in the last few years, and often burned with shame to read them. The attempts to belittle what was at any rate serious and big, the despicable sneers of the reviewer earning his fifteen hundred a year by being funny at the expense of a poet who chose to live on £150 a year for the sake of saying only the thing he really meant; the silences, the wilful fastening upon detail and ignoring of principle—the thousand ways in which an unconscientious reviewer can wound and hurt a sensitive artist—these are what sent John Davidson to his death, whether he knew it or not. He did not mind adverse criticism; he expected disagreement, he welcomed serious attack and controversy; but the thing that got under his

armour and broke his spirit was just this conspiracy to ignore, this innate hatred of the comfortable man for the uncomfortable, this dishonest practice of giving expression to a personal preference in the terms of serious criticism. I know men to-day, earning comfortable incomes, who control the reviewing of books on one or more papers, and who seriously profess and pretend to be concerned with maintaining literary standards, who are really engaged in nothing better than a petty personal conspiracy; who try to ignore or to damn the books of men who have offended them or their friends, and to boom the books of those who have pleased them. This is dishonest. Personal likes and dislikes are very real and respectable things; but to indulge them anonymously under the cover of artistic criticism (which has nothing to do with personal likes and dislikes) is a cowardly and base thing. It is damaging to every one concerned. It bewilders and corrupts the public, it degrades those who do it, and it wounds and damages, more than most people understand, the artist who is really trying.

The first business of every literary critic is to divide the writers of books into two classes: those who write (well or ill) as artists, because it is their vocation, and who make for a serious artistic goal, and those who write (well or ill) as a commercial speculation, to supply a recognised market. To

fail to do that is to fail in everything else. If it had been done in the case of John Davidson he would not have been driven so out of tune with life and the world as he became ; his poverty would not have been degrading to him, nor his unpopularity (his peculiar message would always have been unpopular) disgraceful. He lived so entirely in his work that reviews really mattered to him, although, like all sensitive men, he tried and pretended to be indifferent to them ; and every cheap sneer, every senseless belittlement, every deliberate misrepresentation hounded him a little farther on that bitter, lonely road that he walked. His death is nothing ; but for the misery that drove him to it, for the gradual hollowing out of life which is the prelude to self-destruction (for no one arrives quickly at sane and deliberate suicide), I hold every man responsible who, having in his control the reviewing of contemporary books, and possessing enough education and discernment to discriminate between real and imitation literature, failed to see that Davidson was treated with the attention and respect to which his high talents and loftiness of aim entitled him.

This conspiracy of silence was a very real thing. Last year, seeing how the man was starving for recognition, and in the silence of more competent men, I wrote a long review article attempting to give some account and estimate of his work as a

whole; and I experienced the greatest difficulty in getting it published—not, if you please, on account of the inadequacy of the treatment, but (as I was assured) on account of the subject. It is one of the many things to the credit of Mr. W. L. Courtney's editorial conduct that he took that article and printed it in the *Fortnightly Review*, and so secured for Davidson what he pathetically described as 'the most generous gift that had ever been made to him.'

He was as brave as a man could be. In one of our long talks, sitting at Penzance in front of the lazy waves, he once told me that no man could be unhappy who could write blank verse; and that to write blank verse was the sheerest, most intoxicating joy that he could conceive. We used to laugh a great deal together on those meetings, which he treated as holidays from the dull round of an exile's life. Sometimes he made the pilgrimage to me at the Lizard, oftener I to him at Penzance, which was, compared with my solitude, a metropolis; and we would walk and talk, or sit and be silent together, as the humour took us. Deep underneath the surface lay bitterness and misery; on the top was this pleasure in conversation, in congenial company, in laughter and momentary forgetting. He talked wonderfully sometimes, with a sombre passion, as of a man who lived in Hell. His detachment and discord

from the world made his judgments of living people, his acquaintances, comparatively worthless; like all solitaries he was credulous of gossip, and unconsciously mischievous, and willing to account basely for the very qualities he envied in others. As a result he sometimes seemed to make mischief, which it is the duty of those who cared for him to heal over and forget. In all non-personal matters, things of the spirit, his talk was most wise and illuminating. He had all the Scotsman's eloquence, and a scornful utterance that must have been not unlike Carlyle's; sudden explosions of humour or irony, like crags of granite blasted from a cliff; sudden cadences of melancholy suaveness, like the voice of a Highland woman. The last time I saw him was in July, when I spent two long days with him. I was leaving late on the Sunday afternoon; we had sat for three hours on a seat in a garden high up behind Penzance, and looking over the town far out to sea to the dim, sunny horizon; we were silent, feeling, as we always did when we parted, that a memorable time had come to an end. He came to the station with me, and we were joking and laughing, and making fun of a pompous man whose appearance offended us. When it came to 'good-bye' he suddenly turned gravely to me and put his hand on mine. 'If we do meet again,' he quoted and paused; 'why, we shall smile'; then, as the train

began to move, ' If not,' he went on, and finished the line in a whisper, ' if not, why then this parting is well made.' I felt that I should not see him again.

I am writing in the town of New York, looking out from a window nineteen stories high over the delirium of lights and noises that is the nocturnal expression of this money-mad city, where all that is most hateful and woeful in the world's attitude towards the things of the spirit seems to be gathered up and hurled into the night. I feel very far away from the world that made or marred Davidson's life, and wholly unable to guess what may be the tone of opinion about his death ; but lest no one else should say it, I invite every fellow-craftsman in literature or journalism in England to examine himself on the question I have raised. To every one who professes to care for literature I would say, How far did your care carry you in the matter of John Davidson ? Did you buy his books ? Did you read them ? Did you take any trouble to find out what he was writing ? Did you feel the importance to your art or profession of seeing that serious poetry was received with serious appreciation ? If you did not, consider whether there is not something wrong with our machinery for keeping life in touch with art, something that concerns you, and which you may do your share in improving. You helped to make

him what he was; you helped to determine those sordid limits within which he existed. Remember how he lived: things that are commonplace necessities to most of us who earn even a living were rare luxuries for him. The theatre, the purchase of books, were beyond him; his way of life was what I have described; the one amusement within his reach was—a walk in a country that he grew to hate! He loved conviviality; if he had been less proud and less brave he might have taken to drink—a real temptation to men of his race and class and temperament. But even that solace he latterly put utterly away from him, and on the rare visits of myself or some other of the few friends he saw, a bottle of wine, or a glass of whisky-and-water sipped in the smoking-room of an hotel, marked for him a festival, almost a sacramental occasion.

Davidson is dead, and beyond our help; but there are other men living, trying also to keep faith with themsleves, to do the best that is in them, irrespective of opportunist consideration. Is it too much to ask those who profess to love good literature to encourage rather than discourage this small band? Their work may not be super-excellent, but their attitude towards it is the true right attitude, alone productive of a foundation on which literature can flourish at all. The truth about John Davidson is that he was

hounded out of life, not by the neglect of the public, or the miseries of poverty, or the terrors of ill-health, but by the indifference of his own fellows, those who should have been his comrades in spirit and who, even if they did not praise him as a philosopher, might have loved him as a poet.

The truth—who shall write the truth about him or any man? Let him speak his own truth, in the lines he wrote a year before his death, in the epilogue to his last 'Testament'; that is the truth.

'I felt the world a-spinning on its nave,
I felt it sheering blindly round the sun;
I felt the time had come to find a grave:
I knew it in my heart my work was done.
I took my staff in hand; I took the road
And wandered out to find my last abode.
Hearts of gold and hearts of lead,
Sing it yet in sun and rain,
"Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
Round the world and home again" . . .

My feet are heavy now, but on I go,
My head erect beneath the tragic years;
The way is steep, but I would have it so,
And dusty, but I lay the dust with tears,
Though none may see me weep: alone I climb
The rocky path that leads me out of time—
Out of time and out of all,
Singing yet in sun and rain,
"Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
Round the world and home again" . . .

Farewell the hope that mocked, farewell despair
That went before me still and made the pace.
The earth is full of graves, and mine was there
Before my life began, my resting-place;
And I shall find it out, and with the dead
Lie down forever, all my sayings said.
Deeds all done, songs all sung,
While others chant in sun and rain,
"Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
Round the world and home again."'

ON ZENNOR CLIFFS

ON ZENNOR CLIFFS

IF you do not know Cornwall, undoubtedly the right way to go there is to go by day, to travel westward with the sun and watch all the changing pictures that the long journey affords. In the early summer of the year the sun can give you nearly half a day's start and still dip into the sea beyond Land's End almost as soon as you arrive there. But if you know Cornwall well, and if you have but a day or two to spare, and want to taste to the full the contrast between busy, noisy London and the majestic peace and silence of that rocky land, there is a still better way to go; and that is to travel by night, to sleep in the train, and to wake up to the new world and the new life of the West.

Talk about simple pleasures is seldom free from a taint of priggishness; but really it is a truth of which we cannot be too often reminded that simple things are the best—if only because we can make them elaborate by our own imagination and invention. How pleasant, then, can the little details of the simple journey into Cornwall become! Pleasant to arrive at Paddington at midnight, to

look at the long train of parcels and mails and luggage destined to be scattered by next morning over the whole peninsula—a van here for Plymouth, a truck there for Falmouth, a crate of little live chickens for Probus, a jar of whisky consigned to some small house on the Lizard Downs, and doubtless eagerly expected by the consignee. It is pleasant to be drawn, a part of this long chain of furniture for Cornwall, out into the night, and be lulled by the steady beat of the wheels, and to wake up now and then for a moment in silence and stillness, and wonder where you are—whether at Swindon, or at Bath, or perhaps drawn up near some wayside signal-post among the lush water-meadows beside Exeter—places that you know well by daylight, but that seem strange and romantic when you think of them in the scented darkness of a May midnight. And pleasant to wake up early and find yourself already in Cornwall; to see the familiar life awakening along the line, to see familiar faces and hear familiar voices at the stations, and to see some of the parcels that you had observed in the lamplight of Paddington now tumbled out in the morning sunshine amid the wallflowers of the station-master's garden; and more than pleasant to watch that noble panorama of hills and valleys, of great tree-clad slopes and steep ravines, passing before you as your wheels travel the great road to the West. And as you

go the train grows smaller and the load lighter; the faces become more and more different from the quick, nervous countenances that belong to London; faces broad and open and wondering, and figures gnarled and twisted like the stems of Cornish elms; while the train goes ever more and more slowly, and the halts at each succeeding station grow longer and longer. I saw the jar of whisky, together with a chimney-pot and a brightly painted portion of some agricultural implement, two bathroom taps and a very horrible little modern villa fireplace, put out on the platform at Gwinear Road; and soon after that I myself forsook the train and got into another even smaller and slower train, was dragged round the Riviera-like promontories that separate St. Ives from the world, and was set down amid the silence and the sunshine of that little silver town.

I suppose Cornwall preserves its individuality because it is on the road to nowhere, because it is really the end of England—or, as I prefer to think of it, the beginning of England. And certainly in lovely May weather that wild, stony land between St. Ives and Land's End seemed far more like a beginning than an end; it seemed no monument of things finished, but a promise of things to come. There is a right time of year and a right day in that time for every place in the world; and I think I found the day and the hour when I sat

on the high cliffs by Zennor and looked out on Gurnard's Head to the wide sea. On that northern side of the promontory the sea is quite empty and deserted, although behind you, a few miles to the south, all the ships of the world are going by. But if you want to see how beautiful emptiness and space can be, go to Zennor, grey Zennor with its little church tower and its two or three houses lost amid the great rolling waste of the deserted downs; and walk down to the cliffs and look out on the sea. On this day, sea and sky were merged in one silvery blueness; I could not see the horizon; the blue floor of the sea became, by an invisible conjunction, the blue dome of sky above me. Sheets of flaming gorse were spread all over the grey-green colour of the downs; everywhere among them cropped up rocks grey and black. And that was all. True, the texture of the carpet on which I was sitting was patterned and perfumed by thousands of miniature flowers of a dozen species familiar but nameless to me; yet the chief colours of the world were grey and blue and gold. Except for that low universal murmur that comes from the depths of its unquiet heart, the sea made no sound. But everything else in the world seemed smiling and laughing; the air was heavy with the smell of honey, and rippling with the laughter of larks' voices. The laughter was like a song; no empty sound, but an expression of some pro-

found gladness, a thing both bright and grave, like sunshine on the deep sea.

And as this land is the beginning of England, so to visit it is to go back to the simplicity and beginning of life itself. The promontory of Gurnard's Head stands out in the sea like a black castle covered with towers and pinnacles, as it has stood since the world began, looking not otherwise than this, and suggesting to the men who first looked upon it dreams and legends of castles and fortresses in the sea. There is no time on Zennor cliffs; time passes them by and leaves them unchanged, and there is nothing to tell you in what age you live. That is another reason why, if you only have a little time to spare for a holiday, only a day or two at a rare week-end, it is well to go as far away as possible. It is absurd to think that because you have only a few days it is not worth while making a long journey. The fewer the days, the longer should the journey be in proportion to them, because then you taste the full contrast between your ordinary life and the life into which you have chosen to dip. My last impression of Cornwall on this visit was not the least vivid. I stood at nine o'clock at night on the platform of the wayside station waiting for the train to come and carry me back to London. The station was inland far enough to be out of reach of the sea's voice; and for once I had an

impression, so rare anywhere at all in England, of absolute silence. The station slept; there was no one waiting but me; and for perhaps two minutes there was literally no sound at all. I do not remember ever before in my life being aware of absolute silence. But it was only for a minute. A dog barked somewhere three miles away; some one coughed, perhaps half a mile away; a blind in a window in a house two fields away was rattled. Then, far down the valley, came the first murmuring beat of the train. I lost it again; and again for a few seconds there was absolute silence. Then a bell sounded in the signal-box, and the signal-arm crashed down with a sound and movement that seemed like an earthquake. The beat of the train coming up the valley grew clearer and louder; the station awoke to life, and at last with a roar the big civilised train came in with its long lines of lighted carriages and darkened sleeping-cars. When I got into it I felt that I had left Cornwall behind; but often in the night I awoke and remembered Zennor cliffs, and the laughter and the sun. And when next morning I realised I had been but three days away, I realised also how arbitrary and inaccurate are the dimensions in which we measure our lives.

A HOUSE IN ANGLESEY

A HOUSE IN ANGLESEY

IF you would discover the character of a house you should approach it first at night through a country which is unfamiliar to you. You will thus learn it from the inside and not from the outside; you will wake up in it, and see it first in daylight when you walk out of its own door; and its world will dawn upon you in a natural way, as it would dawn upon a child who had been born within its walls. I saw this house first on an April night of storm, after a long journey in the train whose chief business it is to carry travellers on their way to Ireland. The lights on the mail steamer, as we drew up beside her, shone hospitably enough; but the gale was already strumming a tune on her riggng, and I knew that for all she lay so quiet and motionless in the shelter of the harbour, in ten minutes she would be plunging and nosing into the stiff seas, and her decks would be wet with cold spray.

It was a good night not to be going to sea; and I was glad to leave the bustle of the harbour behind me and speed inland along the pale empty

roads, and exchange the strong salt air of the harbour for the earthy perfumes of the spring night. We skimmed along lonely roads that turned off into lonelier. It was so strange to me not to be going on to Ireland that my consciousness was divided; half of it was on the steamer, and half in this remote and unknown country, travelling farther away from the wind and the sea. The contrast between these two halves of a divided consciousness grew momentarily greater; and just as one half was well out in the heavy seas off the South Stack, listening to the high chanting of the wind against the ship, the other turned a corner into the shelter of a beech wood carpeted with primroses; and by a road of daffodils, and through the silence of a garden, came into the golden lamplight of the doorway. I left the other half to disappear over the horizon of the dark seas, and surrendered myself to the half that had lost itself in this new world. For I had no geography or road lore to guide me; I only knew that my way had lain through the country of the April night, by a road of daffodils, through a wood of primroses, to the garden and the house of my friends. And the next morning, like one that has been born again, I walked out into the world to learn what it was like.

The house is of the dark grey colour of the rocky country, and lies so close under the hill that it

might have been carved out of it. It is a very hidden house; even by day you only see it when you are well within its own demesne. The beech wood veils it in front—a beech wood of grey stems and branches all tipped with brown, a roof all brushed into parallel lines by the prevailing wind, and a floor that was hesitating in texture and colour between the primroses that were going and the bluebells that were coming. All the land about the house, rising to a height on one side and falling to a hollow on the other, has become a garden, not by the apparent brute force of gardeners, but as though loving and skilful hands had helped the earth in what she wanted to do, and assisted the flowers in their games. Where the primroses wanted to be, there was a primrose garden; where plants that loved the marsh had gathered, plants that loved the marsh were protected; up on the croft where the gorse was, the world was given over to the green and gold of gorse and grass; and where the roses had found a paradise of sun and soil and shelter, one would find in summer a paradise of roses. And from the fields behind the house, where the ponies sunned themselves in the lee of a rock, you looked down upon a long lake that might have been an arm of the sea, with little rocky forelands and green shores beyond where the lambs were cropping the sweet grass.

The house itself, of every period and no period,

a thing that has grown naturally to meet the needs of those who have lived in it, has an air of secret and mysterious peace. For many years it slept uninhabited, and no doubt in that time, driven in upon itself, acquired the store of individuality which it seems to possess. Some houses are obviously the expression of those who live in them, mere appendages to the family. Others dominate those who inhabit them, imparting their own character to the generations that come and go, so that the people who live in them seem to be mere products and offspring of the brick and stone. Some houses are tame and highly domesticated, and will adapt themselves to the most complicated and civilised of human wants ; others, of an older period, are savage and unaccommodating, so that it is dangerous to tamper with them and impossible to adapt them ; and in the draughts from their wide chimneys, and the chill of their vast chambers, and the gloom of their halls lighted through narrow slits in the thick walls, the family shivers out an existence at variance with its environment. But this house, although it has a personality entirely of its own, is friendly and accommodating to those whom it shelters. It is like something pagan and wild, some creature of another time that its owners came quietly upon in its sleep and made friends with. This is not a case of the people belonging to the house or the house to the people, so much

as the house and the people living together in harmonious amity, furthering each other's purposes. The house has sheltered the human lives that have grown up there, and the little feet that have pattered in the footprints of Druids and Roman soldiers have grown firm and steady in their steps on the great paths of life; and in return, human hands have cared for the house and the land, and fashioned human lives there without disturbing the pagan spirit that lurks by every rock, in every primrose path, and in every ripple of the silent lake.

As when a traveller gets farther from a piece of country he loses the details and sees more clearly the formation of the whole as it shrinks in perspective; so, as one gets farther away from anything, one loses the grasp of one component quality after another, until only the essential quality remains. Holyhead with its masts and feathers of steam disappears below the horizon; Anglesey, from being a continent, becomes an island, and Wales, from being a world, becomes a slice on the edge of England with Anglesey merely a little piece of it that has been broken off the corner and joined on again. And somewhere in Anglesey, between the beech wood and a hill crowned with a wilderness of gorse, with a warren sloping up on one side and a lake lying like quicksilver in the fold beneath, there is this dark grey house,

occupying through all seasons and weathers this piece of pagan territory. And as this site has been preserved as a dwelling-place of man from time immemorial, so it has come to preserve in itself a quality as of truce and agreement between earth and man; the place where they have come to terms, and established a reign of peace.

EVENSONG AT ETON

EVENSONG AT ETON

IT was by a fortunate chance that as I turned in under the Tudor archway I heard a murmur of harmony coming from the chapel. It followed me through the school, and haunted me in the fields by the river, and finally drew me back within the portals of what I suppose is one of the finest Perpendicular buildings in the world. A friend had brought me to show me the school, which I had never properly seen; the quadrangles and buildings were for the moment empty and deserted; and we were free to admire at our leisure that glorious rose-coloured façade of purest Henry VII. that fronts you on your first entering in at the gate. We wandered about through the corridors and halls of those older buildings which are so worn with successive rivers of young life, so weighted with tradition and steeped in personal history as to be eloquent in themselves, even when thus empty and idle, of all the millions of human destinies that have been governed and influenced by the ideas implanted there. And when we went into that famous Upper School, the panelling of which

is fretted and pierced to an appearance of fine lace by the thousands of names that are carved on it, I felt that I was at a point very near the heart of the England of the historian. The material squalor of the room, and its worn and splintered desks and forms, were in fine contrast to the splendour of the fame that has proceeded from it; and the names carved on the panels, names of those whose voices will echo down the avenues of Time, and names of one's own familiar friends and acquaintances of to-day, made a silent appeal that was none the less eloquent because it was obvious. To carve one's name in wood is no great thing; to have it written here, a record for some considerable part of Time, is to stand committed to something that may become either an enduring honour or an enduring reproach. One could not, standing in this hall, help wishing that Eton were less associated than it is in the minds of everyday people with the jealous privileges of a single class. I have no personal part or inheritance in its traditions, and yet I could not help feeling that I stood here on ground that is common to every Englishman; and that Eton, like Windsor across the river, is less the property of the passing generation that inhabits it than of the whole race of Englishmen all over the world.

And the feeling deepened as we passed out through the courtyard into the playing-fields

beyond. They were all silent and empty now in the Sunday evening sunshine; but I had heard only the day before the shouts of victory at Lord's and there seemed to be echoes everywhere. And from the blaze of the masters' garden to the shade of the last tree in the last field, one walked through territory as national and as significant of what is common to the whole race as Trafalgar Square or Whitehall. Across the gentle river lay Windsor Castle; it turns a feudal frown on every other side, but on Eton it seems to smile down in a friendly way as upon a younger brother; and although both have inspired some famous sayings and not a little elegant poetry, they had for me on that quiet afternoon a significance no more awful and no less intimate than that of the village green and church in any English village—so safe and quiet, so typical of things that become what they are by slow and silent growth, and remain what they are because of their inherent correspondence with the spirit of the country and the people. And as the playing-fields of any public school are its true centre, where emulation, undirected by pastors and masters, conducts its struggles in a truly republican spirit, so one could hardly feel surprised that the victories gained here are sometimes more highly valued than those of the class-room, and that in many cases they have furnished certain high trumpet-notes of martial

inspiration more deeply stirring than any heard by the fountains of Helicon, or echoed on the twin peaks of Parnassus.

But the snatch of harmony heard as we had passed the entrance drew us back there, up the worn stone steps, and within the doors of the chapel. The service was nearly over, and a resonant voice was intoning that group of prayers which is the Compline of the English Church. The screen was like a proscenium, through which the drama and actors could be seen as on a stage. One could distinguish hardly any features save those of the Head and the Provost. The rest was an impression of boyhood, youth and adolescence, very sensitive, very thrilling; for here within the great stone building was the lively pulse and blood of Eton; here, within the sanctuary designed to commemorate the eternal Sabbath, was a select company of youth eloquent of the movement, life and warfare of the world to-day. The prayers flowed on to an end, followed by a harmony of voices and organ in which the choir and the school alternated; this ended, the blessing was given. A brief pause, a ripple of movement down the long ranks, and broad waves of sound filled the vaulted space while the choir came out under the screen, followed by the clergy. With the departure of the ecclesiastical body the cathedral associations vanished; one was simply at school again. After the clergy

came the Head Master, then the Provost; and as this august procession passed me I felt the old awe of twenty years ago which no schoolboy ever quite forgets. There is no majesty so isolated and implacable as that of the Head Master. Kings, judges, field-marshals, admirals one may meet in after life, and never be in doubt that they are, after all, common clay; but what the King is to his lowest subject, the judge to the criminal, the field-marshal to the common soldier, and the admiral to a cook's mate—all these and more is the typical Head to the small boy, and especially to the idle small boy. I remembered the uncompromising directness, the glittering eye, the frozen smile, the voice that said 'Ha!' suddenly and loudly in place of laughter—all attributes of the eternal Head Master—and instinctively I moved a little out of the line of Mr. Lyttelton's mild vision until the procession had passed.

Then came the moment for which this procession was but a preparation, when the members of the Upper School, Collegers first, then the Oppidan sixth form in single file, then the main body, in a certain informal order, departed. The tide of black figures flowed out under the archway, many of them absurd to the eye with their immature, awkward figures clothed in the formal garb of men, but none of them absurd to the mind. Individually they might be athletic or weedy, well or loosely

knit, plain or handsome; but collectively they were dignified with the dignity that comes of perfect naturalness and unconsciousness, and imposing with an effect all the greater for being unstudied. . . . The last footfall sounded, the voices died away, and left the chapel empty but for the organ voice that still flowed about it as though it were repeating to itself some echo of the songs they had sung. But one's thoughts went out with the departing footsteps, wondering on what far roads they would travel and to what destinies they would be summoned, and what of glory or of shame they would accomplish for Eton and for England.

In such an hour and mood Eton College Chapel may inspire graver thoughts than even Westminster Abbey, and its furniture of young and living monuments impress one more profoundly than the silent stone memorials of things long dead and gone. If yesterday matters to us, it is surely because of its bearing on to-day and to-morrow; for the present is more dramatic than the past, and the least of the living more splendid and pathetic than the greatest of the dead.

A PARIS CAFÉ

A PARIS CAFÉ

IT exists to gratify appetite rather than to satisfy hunger; it is one of the great granaries of wild oats that have been established in cosmopolitan Paris as a kind of international reserve of that commodity, in case the crop should ever fail. In a word, it is a restaurant held in great repute by the disreputable, famous among the infamous, as well as among the great throng of the reputable and the famous who in their hours of relaxation or curiosity have at one time or another sat at its tables.

It is hard for any one who has never been there, or in some similar place in Paris or Vienna, to realise what it is like. It is hard for one sitting six hundred miles away, with the sound of the sea in his ears, to believe that it is a real place, or that its tragic life goes on in daily ebb and flow, as punctual as the tides, whether he remembers it or not. Such a chain of reality intervenes—downs, windswept in the stormy night; the salt dark waves of the Channel; fields newly turned by the plough; cottages, farmsteads, docks, railways,

towns—and at the end of this dark perspective, as I look in imagination, the lurid spot of light in the heart of Paris that might well to the Puritan mind stand for an image of Hela, or reveal the company of the damned sitting feasting in the very glare of Tophet. Yet if I were suddenly to be transported across the intervening miles—I, or any one willing to view what he saw with a mind open and sensitive to impression—we should at once begin to fall under the spell; to find it interesting, to find it fascinating, to feel that it was reality, and that the world beyond was a phantom and a dream. A very real and strenuous life—the life of Paris herself, the life of France—flows round it, as a broad river eddies and swirls round an islet, leaving it forgotten or unheeded; on the one side of the wall there is the modern world of industry, commerce, politics—on the other this frank Pagan worship of Bacchus and Venus.

There is nothing particularly French about it; nothing Parisian, even, in the true sense of the word—except in so far as it represents something foreign which can yet only flourish to perfection in Paris—that friendly soil to which (to use a contradiction) so many alien plants are indigenous. There are so many Parises—the Paris of the artist, of the diplomat, of the financier, of the milliner, of the rich Jew, of the poor Frenchman, the Paradise of the American, the Inferno of the

Puritan—and each feels that he, and he alone, holds the key to her fascinating mysteries. Our café belongs to none of these; it is of the Paris of expensive pleasure, designed for that cosmopolitan race of money-spenders that Paris in her heart so dearly loves and so warmly welcomes. Englishmen and Americans are its chief patrons—because it represents something that cannot exist in England or America. New York may imitate the externals, but it cannot achieve the nameless atmosphere of gaiety, the heartless happiness of Paris. There was—happily is no more—a terrible and doleful travesty of it in London; a place which offered a spectacle of intrinsic indecency and horror only possible in a Puritan country and under a grandmotherly legislation; for grandmothers, however active they may be for our welfare, cannot go everywhere, and have a way of assuming that the horrors they do not see are all right, or else are necessary horrors. A café like this in London is as impossible as Simpson's would be in Buda-Pesth. It represents something which the Englishman, if he recognises its existence at all, prefers to keep outside his native life; a commodity which he is content to purchase in a foriegn market, and has no ambition to produce at home—which in this case is sound fiscal wisdom, and the only true Protection.

There is nothing æsthetically indecent about it

or ugly to the eye. Laughter is not ugly ; women's clothes, as made in Paris, are not often ugly ; bright eyes are not ugly ; wine and flowers and jewels, and the demeanour of people willing to amuse and to be amused, are not ugly ; to see people happy, amused, forgetful of the shadowy side of life, for however brief a time or by whatever means, is not an ugly sight. And the interest of our café just depends on how far you take it for what it offers and pretends to be, and not for what it actually is or may be. Tragedies and mortal sins are not its concern ; you go there on your own responsibility ; if you cannot enjoy yourself there without these disagreeable consequences, that is your own affair. In other words, it is a little corner of the universe raised, so to speak, to a higher power ; the laws that obtain there are the laws that govern life everywhere ; like every part and corner of the earth it is a school of philosophy for those who wish to learn, and a school of damnation for those who wish to be damned. You may learn your philosophy a little sooner or be damned a little quicker there than in other places—that is all.

That is why our café is interesting to artists, and to all of us whose business it is to study human nature in as many places and under as many different conditions as possible ; that is why the faces of some of its frequenters have been seen on

so many canvases, and faces and characters alike given an immortality so strangely inconsistent with their brief destinies. There is something in its atmosphere—an atmosphere from which the ugly vice of hypocrisy is entirely absent—that acts as a reagent on certain natures, selecting and precipitating the more human qualities. Men, at any rate, are very much themselves there; even the fearfully-minded, and those suffering from a sense of misbehaviour, are fortified by a consciousness that all are in the same boat, and the absence of the disapproving eye seems to release something in their facial expression, so that a face which may be familiar to us as hard, or furtive, or mean, becomes transfigured, and beams openly with frank and genial enjoyment. A sense of shame may be a very salutary virtue—I am not sure of that; at any rate, it is very demeaning to the appearance; and it is to the credit of this place that you will never see any one look ashamed there. You may see faces tired, wearied to death; you may see faces sorry, faces angry, you may see the expressions of hatred, desire, and jealousy in all their terrible nakedness; but the disfigurement of shame on a human countenance I think you will not see there. The reason is, that people are there either themselves or are accepted for what they wish to seem; and, in these circumstances, no one is ever ashamed.

The interest of these midnight hours as a human spectacle depends entirely on how deep you go. You must not go deep at all if you wish to be a partner with the spirit of gaiety. It is all a surface, polished and faceted; the joy is as deep as a mirror—no deeper. On the surface you have laughter, pretty faces, eager eyes, wine, flowers, stimulation of all the centres of sensuous enjoyment. Look a little deeper, and you will notice the tiredness that underlies the gaiety on some of these beautiful women's faces, and, I fear, the extreme vacuity of some of the men's; the gaiety seems artificial. A little deeper, it is the sheer interest and curiosity of it that will appeal to you, quite impersonally. A little deeper, and you see that under the glittering surface, moving to the captivating measures of the music, a little world of the virtues is at work—courage, anxieties bravely concealed, humanity on the part of the brutal, kindness shown by the unkind—it becomes admirable. A little deeper, and the basis of it all is perceived to be selfishness, lust, and greed; it becomes, for its fine trappings, primitive and sordid. Deeper still, and you see the terrible abyss, empty as death, over which it hangs; and it becomes, according to your temperament, the most cruel of farces or most hideous of tragedies. If your mind insists on carrying you below the surface, you had better stop at the third story

down ; or, if you are an incorrigible sentimentalist, at the fourth. No deeper, at your peril : you have no business there, you can do nothing there except suffer and be miserable—and what good is that ? Fortunately there seems to be no tendency on the part of the principal patrons to descend below the surface ; for, if the custom were otherwise, this café-restaurant would close next week.

One deeper interest than that of the mere surface it is, perhaps, permissible to notice—at any rate for me, as I am not an habitué. It has the tragic fascination of all places that hold eloquent echoes and memories of voices and faces departed. Amid the gay, merry throng at the many tables, beside those who feast and those who sing, between lover and mistress, buyer and bought, sit the ghosts of men and women who have feasted there, who have been glad there, been sorry there. They sit, for those who have eyes to see them, like skeletons at the nightly feast, to remind the revellers that joy may endure for a night but that heaviness comes in the morning ; and that heaviness rather than happiness is the true nature of the life of pleasure. For many of those ghosts this scene of colour and movement, of brilliant, tragic activity, with its smouldering fires and its endless languishing strains of music, has been their last heaven-upon-earth—so real and desirable to them once, so entirely unreal

and unimportant now. And for you, also, who are not a ghost, its reality will only last while you are there. Once let the great doors swing behind you and you are in another world, on which, perhaps, the sun is just rising. And long after the summer dawn has come, it may be full garish night in the café; only you will not believe it. It is the night of a dream, the city of a dream, of which, if you searched for it by daylight, you would find no trace.

QUACK RELIGIONS

QUACK RELIGIONS

A NUMBER of good people are very deeply concerned with the alleged missionary efforts of the Mormons in England; and meanwhile a far wider-reaching and more mischievous business, also directed from America, is being prosecuted; not only without opposition, but apparently with considerable success among the unhappy people of this country. I say the unhappy people because it is always they who fall the most ready prey to things which are offered as universal remedies for human ills. Long ago the Americans discovered what a profitable source of money-making existed in people's bodily ailments, and they organised the quack medicine business on such a basis that it has reached the gigantic proportions which we know to-day. It was they also who discovered how to work the field, hitherto untilled from a commercial point of view, that lay in spiritual sickness; and they have now organised quack religions on a scale that threatens to rival the business of the pill and the bottle. It is not the people who are whole that need a physician, but

they that are sick; and this the Americans recognise so well that they avoid young and healthy communities, and fasten themselves upon the over-civilised and the diseased, as certain parasites in a fish-pond attach themselves to the bodies of fish that show signs of age or debility. The effect of these quack ministrations is almost entirely disastrous; not because they do not sometimes seem to effect cures; not because people are not sometimes apparently happier and better for the mental exercises prescribed for them, but because nearly all of these sham philosophies are based on the principle of self-deception, the practice of refusing to face facts, and on a conspiracy to call things which are unpleasant by pleasant names, and ultimately to cheat oneself into the belief that they do not exist. The best that can be said for them is that certain wretched people, who have hitherto lived aimless lives of morbid introspection and meditation on their own sufferings, have some mental discipline applied to them, and are given amusing mental exercises to perform which take their thoughts off themselves. Then they get better and ascribe their cure to some magic and mystical effect of the Truth, or the Light, or the Science, or the New Thought, or whatever the trademark may be of the spiritual bolus which they have swallowed. And then they go out into the world and themselves become eager missionaries;

they work in association with others; they have something to do; in short, they find life interesting, and the game goes merrily on.

I went one Sunday evening to Bechstein Hall and attended an entertainment described as the 'New Thought Church.' The hall was four-fifths full of middle-class women and a fair sprinkling of men. Most of the people were unhappy and disagreeable-looking, and wore ugly clothes. There were few outward or visible signs of exceptional inward grace among the audience. The entertainment began with the playing, by a violinist and pianist, of the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, as an opening voluntary. Many of the New Thinkers bowed their heads as though in prayer; although on consulting a pamphlet that was on sale at the doors I gathered that they were not praying, but 'concentrating.' When the music ceased a lady with a hard and powerful American accent and a plain, strong countenance, commanded us to repeat the 'Affirmation of Union,' which was a kind of dogmatic imitation of a creed, in which the following clauses occurred: 'When thou God searchest my heart thou wilt find it clean utterly,' and 'I am one with health, wealth, and love; they are manifesting for me now,' and 'I have perfect peace, power, plenty, and divine realisation'—whatever that may mean. Then the lady commanded us to rise and sing the opening hymn—a piece of

doggerel which, so far as doctrine went, might unfortunately have appeared in any Christian hymn-book. Then came a series of announcements about various meetings and classes and lectures, some of which were free and some not free, but all of which were designed obviously to give occupation and interest to the New Thinkers; to keep them busy and thinking about the New Thought. Then the lady recited some verses of poetry which I could not hear. Then we had another quack hymn. The lady then recited—still with an American accent—a passage from one of the Gospels, immediately following which a few bars of the piano sounded, and Miss Esther Palliser's voice was heard singing 'Is it raining, little flower?' The audience appreciated this song so much that they encored it, and we were for the moment back in the true Bechstein Hall atmosphere.

Then came the address. The most sympathetic description that I can give of it is that it was a piece of not very lucid exposition, the result of some very cloudy and unlucid thinking. It told the audience of many things about the history of Jesus Christ, which, unless they were New Thinkers, they had not heard before. Jesus, the lady told us, studied first under all the doctors of his own land and acquired the 'whole consciousness' of their learning; then he went to India and acquired the whole

consciousness of Indian learning; then he went to a place which the lady called 'Tibbet' and acquired that; then to Persia, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and other centres of learning and civilisation, and acquired them. I was only surprised that America was not included in this itinerary. After that the exposition went on with a great deal of cloudy thought about what the speaker called the 'noo civilisation' and the 'noo cahnsciousness'; and often she referred contemptuously to the 'old civilisation'; and it was some time before I discovered that by the 'old civilisation' she meant the facts of life and the universe as they are recorded by history and interpreted by a consensus of enlightened and educated opinion; and that by the 'noo civilisation' she meant what they think in Boston and America. She said 'I am often asked questions on this side about the noo civilisation and the noo thought, questions which show that you on this side are still puzzling and inquiring about things that we in America have long ceased even to question.' She went on in a very kind and gentle way to attempt to put things, as she thought, plainly for our backward and benighted minds, so that we too should be able to get out of that awkward habit of questioning things that were accepted as unquestionable truth in Boston. But though I honestly tried to understand what she meant she did not make anything clear to me.

She used freely and impartially the pseudo-philosophic jargon of the Theosophists, and of other sects which in comparison with her own are of a quite venerable antiquity, and such phrases as 'emanation,' 'cosmic consciousness,' 'planes of consciousness,' and such words as 'at-one-ment'—that kind of dreary religious pun which a very young curate makes in his first sermon—were freely drawn upon; but I do not think that the audience really understood very much. I came away as soon as the sermon was over, thus escaping the collection and the final hymn, of which the first and the fourth lines of the first verse were 'I 'm healed, praise God, I 'm healed,' and of the second verse, by a pretty antiphonal conceit, 'You 're healed, praise God, you 're healed.' Toll was paid at the door, however, by the purchase of two little pamphlets, costing about a penny each to produce, for which half-a-crown was charged.

I do not pretend I have given a fair or full exposition of what is called the New Thought; but I have recorded quite fairly the impression that this 'church' produced on me; and I do not think that any amount of spending twenty guineas on a course of lectures, or of many half-crowns for many pamphlets, would either enlighten my mind or make life any easier for me to live. I am not in the least unsympathetic to the people who search for and find these alleged cures for the burden of life.

If this quack religion made life permanently better and happier I should try to be an adherent; but the trouble with all these nostrums is—what the foolish and unhappy people who flock in crowds to enrol themselves will not see—that they are utterly unseaworthy craft in which to attempt the voyage of life. They are smartly painted, turned out from America with all the latest things in patent gears, dressed with attractive flags, and guaranteed to reach the spiritual Eldorado for which people yearn in the least possible time, with the least possible effort, and in the greatest possible comfort. And so they are crowded with emigrants from the country of fact to the rosy land of illusion. But, alas, they never reach their destination. The unhappy voyagers are not even immune from seasickness; and at the moment when they need shelter most, when they are farthest from land, down goes their rotten craft under their feet, and they are left struggling again in the sea of life, weakened and enervated by their long course of make-believe. A few manage to swim ashore, or to cling to rafts and life-belts, until they are picked up or drift within the beams of one of the calm, fixed lights that never quite leave the world in darkness.

We have all seen such cases. Those who have friends who are addicted to any of these fraudulent and intellectually bewildering schools have gener-

ally not long to wait till they see some such result as I have described. That many of the apostles of these quack religions are themselves in earnest I have no doubt. I do not accuse the lady of this Sunday evening of being a fraudulent person; I think it likely that she is a much more dangerous kind of missionary, one who herself believes in the quack medicine, and is earnestly anxious to extend its benefits to others. Hence her laborious life, hence her assurance that everything desirable is quite simple. Our present life is difficult or painful; she tells us that there are 'planes of consciousness,' and that we must abstract ourselves from one and get into another, when it will be easy and pleasant.

Yes, there are planes of consciousness; there are likewise stupors of unconsciousness; there are also, good Madam, quite bottomless abysses of stupidity and black error from which, if we fall into them, no rope made in Boston, or anywhere else in America, will be long enough to drag us out.

THE HOUSEFLY

THE HOUSEFLY

EVERY man to his taste. Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, in an article full of generous appreciation of the mosquito's musical and carnivorous habits, goes out of his way to make an unworthy attack upon the housefly. Hear him: 'I like mosquitoes; they do not creep or run, swarm into food or drink, or pour down from the lamp in writhing disablement, but go about their bloodthirsty business with the clean grace and lively intelligence of a carnivorous, predatory animal. It gives me no horror to be attacked by mosquitoes; they have their annual tribute from me as part of the holiday routine. Some thymol pounded in vaseline for the face and ankles, a little hole scraped with a needle in the white centre of a smarting bite and filled with a grain or two of wet table salt; these are my simple and satisfactory remedies. Confident in them, I find the silvery trumpets in the room blend in a drowsy harmony with the louder singing of the grasshoppers that shrills through the open window.' And again: 'Bluebottles and houseflies are a domestic plague

possibly less annoying but at least as dangerous as cockroaches. To my mind they are incomparably more repulsive than mosquitoes. They are not bloodsuckers, coveting the clean juices of the body, but are attracted by the odours of filth and corruption, and their attentions are an insult and a degradation.'

Now at the time this article was written the flies of England (where there was a dearth of them) had apparently organised a visit to the borders of the Forest of Fontainebleau, where I also was staying. And as I had unusual opportunities for observing their habits I wished to write, if not an appreciation of the housefly, at any rate a tribute more worthy than Dr. Mitchell's description of them as creatures whose 'attentions are an insult and a degradation.' I do not love the housefly, but I greatly admire him. Every man to his taste, I say; every man to his trade also; for Dr. Mitchell, the distinguished zoologist, armed with his thymol and vaseline, the praise of the predatory mosquito; let it be mine, as a mere observer of life, to hymn the greatness, if not the attractiveness, of the common housefly.

It is commonly supposed that man is the lord of creation; that above all creatures he possesses and enjoys the earth. A very little reflection will make it plain that this is nonsense. If lordship and enjoyment mean having the greatest freedom

and usufruct of a thing with the least toil and inconvenience, then there is no question as to who it is who owns the earth. It is the housefly. He inhabits it from pole to pole ; his line is gone out into the whole world, and there is no speech nor language where his voice is not heard. He does not need to vary his appearance or his habits with the degrees of latitude and longitude. He has been since the beginning of time, and will be, unchanged, until the end ; he is equally at home in the Klondyke or in Arabia, and a fly from Archangel would meet and understand a fly from the Andaman Islands without the slightest difficulty. The fly has no home of his own because he does not need one ; the earth is his home. He is dependent on nothing at all, as far as I can see, so long as his slave, man, is there to toil for him. Unlike the mosquito, he is not restricted in his diet to 'the clean juices of the body' ; he can and does eat anything. But the flies which I have been studying do not live upon filth and corruption ; their diet seems to be a light and varied one, suitable to the climate and the country. To-day, for example, they had for lunch a little melon, a little of the oil in which sardines are preserved, some clear mutton gravy, peaches, and coffee, with a little light Burgundy and water to drink. Most of them took a little sugar afterwards. This seems to me a pleasanter diet than what Dr. Mitchell

calls the 'clean juices of the body,' and it is certainly less troublesome to provide.

I suppose the fly, moreover, is about the most active and untiring creature in the world. He is magnificently independent. It is true that he has few enemies after his birth. Most of them, such as spiders, are heavily handicapped, and he has merely to avoid them. But what a splendid position, to have practically disposed of all your enemies before your birth! And when I consider that the fly is equally happy walking along the thin edge of a sheet of paper, or running round the rim of a glass; that it can both fly quicker and run quicker than anything else of its size; that it can find repose standing upside down on the ceiling; that it needs neither to toil nor to spin; that it has no house or nest to build; that it never has to fight or work or feel weary or bored; that it is carried free all over the world, and lodged and fed on the best—then I think that, if this is to be a parasite, there is a great deal to be said for being a parasite. And man, wildly and quite uselessly flicking about with his handkerchief, slapping at his own face, getting hot, working hard for poor rewards, travelling short distances with great labour and discomfort, having to rear for himself elaborate dwellings, with difficulty procuring food, fighting against and destroying his own kind with bayonets and exploding

shells in order to settle a difference about the occupation of a fragment of the earth's surface—surely, in even one of the myriad eyes of the fly, he must cut rather a pathetic figure.

One does not, I think, always realise the extreme mobility of the housefly. One day I was in a train which was drawn up at a station on the P.L.M. line in France. There was a fly with me in the carriage, and the window was open. Presently the Savoie express went by, its speed reduced for the moment to a crawl as it passed over the points of a junction. As the wagon-restaurant passed my carriage one of the cooks opened the window and put his head out. Instantly my fly left my carriage and flew into the Savoie express; the window was shut, and the *train de luxe*, with its long line of polished and glittering saloons of the International Sleeping Car Company, went on its expensive way. The next stopping-place, if I am not mistaken, would be Dijon; but the fly would probably still be lunching in the restaurant, and would hardly alight there. A mouse or a bird or a beetle attempting to use this means of locomotion would have been observed at once, and either killed or ignominiously ejected; not so the fly. It is extremely probable that the same evening he alighted at Geneva, or conceivably went on via Modane into Italy. And wherever he chose to quit the train, whether in Switzerland or

Italy, this fly, who had spent the morning before in Paris, would find himslf equally at home. Without fares to pay or luggage to pack, and with the briefest of toilets—standing on four legs and brushing the others together two at a time—he was ready to fly out and take possession of whatever part of the world he was in, to dine in the most fashionable restaurants or sleep in the most comfortable hotels; and the moment he felt bored, to take ship or train or horse or motor-car or aeroplane, and travel the world until he was ready to alight again.

To have this freedom is, I repeat, to have the real kingship and possession of the earth. Man can make things, because he needs them. He builds locomotives and houses and ships; the fly merely uses them when it is convenient to him to do so, but he is in no wise dependent on them. The two great causes of strife, love and property, have no terrors for the fly; as to the first—well, there are so many flies; as to the second, you cannot fight about property when you own the whole world. We, aching with toil and sorrow, may call the fly our parasite; but the fly, restful and partaking, might justly call us his slaves. Must we not, then, if only we be honest, admit to feeling envious of the housefly's privileges? And has not Dr. Chalmers Mitchell's love for the carnivora betrayed him into an injustice? He is too learned

and discerning, and has been too good and sympathetic a friend to animals, for this libel on the housefly to be accepted as being really representative of his feelings. Let him, in his summer retreat, what time the grasshopper shrills its drowsy harmony outside the window, and the yellow-fever mosquito digs its proboscis into his willing flesh, consider what I have written, and say if the pleasures of anointing his face with vaseline and thymol, or scraping holes in his skin with a needle and filling them with wet salt, have not unduly biassed him in favour of the mosquito, and admit that my housefly is from every point of view, even that of music, a more formidable and prodigious member of creation.

THE BARRIER LINE

THE BARRIER LINE

PEOPLE who live in Suffolk will smile at the thought of their country being unknown to any one; yet to the majority of those who travel in England in search of beauty the parallelogram that is bounded by Cambridge and King's Lynn on the west, and Ipswich and Norwich on the east, is almost undiscovered country. The Broads and the Fens are known, the creeks and rivers of Essex are populous with those who go down to the sea in little boats for the week-end; but the smiling country that lies between remains isolated in a peculiar way. It is one of the few parts of England that remains indeed a country by itself, like Cornwall and the west country; it is on the road to nowhere; there are no popular approaches to it by sea; and the frowning barrier of the Great Eastern Railway holds it almost inviolate from the south and the west. People who live there do not talk or boast much about it; no novelist of eminence has given it literary fame; and such notoriety as it has it shares with the greater country of East Anglia of which it is a part. The obvious

beauties of Surrey and the ease of access to it have long made it a vast suburb of London; Sussex with its downs and its weald lives in a state of uneasy violation by reason of the roads between London and Brighton that run through it. But stockbrokers and actresses have not discovered Suffolk; and such of the former as go to Sheringham and Cromer go by rail rather than by road, for the populous and unsightly country to the east of London keeps the motor cars away. Access to Suffolk thus involves travel by the Great Eastern Railway; and only a great enthusiasm or a dire necessity will induce people to launch themselves from Liverpool Street Station.

It is indeed a great adventure. Liverpool Street is at once a battlefield and a museum of antiquities. There, if you are careful to avoid the really good main-line expresses, you can study to perfection the mysterious rites and dark superstitions connected with early travel by railway in England. Sometimes, if I have time to spare, I like to wander away from the busy platforms among the dark catacombs thickly crusted with soot and barely illuminated by flickering gas-jets which have wavered in the gloom of decades. It requires some courage; the air is chill and damp; strange implements, some of them apparently invented by a child for the conveyance of luggage, and others designed for purposes which only an antiquary

could identify, lie about in the gloom ; vast cloak-rooms gape for the reception of that cloak which the railway company is convinced that you carry and wish to abandon ; barricaded inquiry offices remind you of the thousands of inquiries that will never receive any answer ; you glance shudderingly into the refreshment rooms and wonder what depth of mortal weariness it is that can find refreshment there. Strange shadows, gigantic and discarded toys, lurk in the gloom ; you feel that you have wandered into another age ; panic seizes you ; and you flee from these grim vaults with almost a sense of joy to the demented crowds of your fellow-men who are joining in the witches' Sabbath of the departure platform.

You buy a ticket, in itself a marvellous piece of colour-printing, an infinitely small, costly and perdurable thing. Whatever be the price of it, it is almost sure to end in fivepence halfpenny or sevenpence halfpenny, thus providing you with two of the most useless sums of small change known to our currency. You hire a man (who has already been paid to do it) to carry your luggage to the train, and watch the foul ritual of label-gumming and trunk-destroying carried on before your eyes. That which will presently be set upon your white bedroom floor lies now in a pool of filth on the ground, and now amid the splintering ruins of what is called the luggage van, a heap of the

partially despoiled carcases of rabbits being very likely thrown upon it. And you leave it there and climb into a musty ark called a first-class carriage. I assume that you are pursuing your studies in a really antiquarian spirit, and steadfastly avoiding the smart corridor trains to Yarmouth or Cambridge. You therefore go by a stopping train. The carriage you enter is called First, not as you might suppose in accordance with any standard of comfort, or with any idea of providing you with accommodation in proportion to the sum you have paid, but for the simple reason that there is nothing better; things worse there are, called Second and Third; obviously what is not so bad as they must be First. And with a shriek and a jolt the crazy ark, in company of some dozen and a half other arks in various stages of decay, rumbles out into the sunshine and the malty breezes of Stratford.

Thus you obey the invitation of the railway company to 'travel in luxury and comfort'; and with unbiassed mind pursue your investigations. The ark is a species of prison van divided into compartments; each is a trap in case of accident. If you were in any extremity no cry for help could reach the people in the traps on either side of you, nor, if it did, could they help you. There is a mechanism concealed in the roof of the carriage of which the chief impression on any traveller's mind is the amount of the penalty to be inflicted for its

improper use. Beyond that there is nothing except those wonderful notices that give you information about the luncheon-basket. Here again you are back in the dark ages of travel, when to commit oneself a few miles upon the road was a considerable hazard, attended by fatigues and privations, which, in fact, are still in existence. Take the luncheon-basket. The string of arks draws up at a station; you are hungry and exhausted; you think you will embark on the adventure of a luncheon-basket. But though the railway owns hundreds of stations, each with its grim refectory, only about a dozen of them can cope with the complicated machinery of the luncheon-basket, which, while it is no worse on the Great Eastern than on any other line, is from beginning to end a sheer superstition on the part of the railway companies.

At first sight it looks like a miniature arsenal; implements of every kind are slung in racks upon the lid; there is for a moment a deceptive and appetising appearance of good cheer; but it is only for a moment. The antiquarian researches of the authorities have led them to assume that you will drink claret for lunch, although of all the people who use the railway not one in thirty, of his own choice, habitually drinks claret for lunch. You take off the cover and see a portion of the limbs of a dead fowl with a quantity of damp ham piled upon a plate; you take out the plate and immedi-

ately realise that there is nowhere to put it. You put it back in the basket, and extract from the rack the implements necessary to cope with it. But you find that the basket is so constructed that you cannot reach it, the implements are not long enough.

If you are wise you give up any attempt to divide your meal into a regular order of courses, and eat anything that you are able to extract. Finally, you uncork the claret and drink a little, a very little, out of an ingenious glass, as narrow as a test tube, apparently designed by the company in a fit of remorse to prevent you from drinking anything at all. Then you notice that you are asked to restore all the articles to the places provided for them. You begin cheerfully enough, but when you have tried to refit the plate and the mustard, the knives, the bread, the cheese, and the salad—for they are all there still—you find that it is impossible. Either they have swollen or you have gone mad; there seem to be incredibly more things than when you started; and finally, ashamed and disgusted with the mess, you pile them in as best you may and push the basket out of sight under the seat, where it collects in its uncleansible crevices dust and microbes with which to garnish the next luncheon.

If you are in luck the train will stop at Mark's Tey; and as you have now in the course of some

hours' travelling quite lost any panic fear that it will start unexpectedly, you get out and watch the incredibly complicated evolutions that take place. Most railway companies like to have their platforms opposite each other, but the Great Eastern Company discovered a system whereby the confusion of two stations could be combined in one, by making the up platform begin where the down platform ends, so that the station altogether seems to be about a mile long. The chain of arks is broken at one point; there is to be shunting, and the station staff settle themselves to the rousing game. There is an engine, but it would be too simple to use that. A horse is brought up which, with brave staggering in the six-foot way, sets some of the arks in motion. When they have gone far enough, some of them are again detached and allowed to slide back with a bang into the rear of the train. Then the engine is detached with a loud noise and disappears like a rocket, apparently into space. A deep peace falls upon the scene; the horse retires into his shed and the staff melts away; there is not a sound but the murmur of voices and the drowsy hum of bees. After about ten minutes of apparently quite wanton and fantastic delay, a similar, but perhaps more complicated evolution takes place, and the porters again rouse themselves to the game. For a quarter of an hour ensue more bumpings, staggerings of the horse, flying switches,

and shrieking of brake-blocks, with the final result that three arks have been detached from the train and sent into a siding where they will presently wander off among the happy fields of Lavenham. Then the engine reappears in the distance, as though it had forgotten something. It had; it had forgotten the train. But you will not forget the train, even if you never see it again; neither will you, however often you may use it, or however familiar its sooty outlines may become to you, ever lose your sense of wonder and amazement at the rites and mysteries and ceremonies connected with it.

This is why people do not know much about Suffolk. It is more easy to go to China than to some parts of Suffolk; and though you were to cross the Himalayas into Tibet, and penetrate to the very heart of Lhassa, you would encounter less quaint superstition, and be involved in a less staggering ritual than that which you will meet with between Liverpool Street and Ipswich.

CONCERNING SERVANTS

SERVANTS

ALL human relationships are interesting, and each has its own set of problems. The simplest bonds are those which Nature has established for us, which begin with our birth, endure throughout our lives, and are only soluble in the funeral earth or fire. Those are most complicated which are born of our own individualities and are founded upon emotions, which rise suddenly, as though by a miracle, and vanish again as though they had never been. And those are perhaps the most satisfactory which are simply practical in their origin, which are founded upon the dependence which one human being has upon another, and which rest upon mutual convenience and the performance of mutual service. Of this nature is the relation between master and servant, which, in its most intimate form of domestic service, has always presented, and will always present, problems of a particularly delicate nature. There are many kinds of domestic servant, but for the moment I am considering not the humble 'help' who lives on terms of necessary intimacy with an employer whose machinery of life is of the very simplest

order, but that admirable class devoted by vocation and training to perform the duties and ritual associated with the more complicated forms of civilised existence. With these, service is a profession containing various ranks, offering possibilities of promotion, positions of great confidence, and opportunities for a wide and various experience. Such servants live an ordered life which, although it is passed under the same roof, is entirely and startlingly different from the lives of those on whom they wait. They think differently from their masters, regard life differently, have different ideals of conduct.

The theorist who likes to pretend that there are no divisions in classes here interrupts me with 'Nonsense! they are human beings, and have like passions with ourselves.' Yes, Fool, of course they have; but they do not exhibit them always in the same way. The tiger and the wren have also like passions, but there is still a class division between tigers and wrens; and the fact that two classes of people so different in their habits live in such intimacy under one roof is what makes the relationship interesting and delicate. Our servants know us well; they see us at all hours; they surprise us when we are off our guard; they observe our daily habits and assist at the most intimate scenes. But we do not know them nearly so well. We never see them off their guard; we

see them only when they are on duty, with their faces and tones composed to a certain impersonal formality; we see them only in relation to ourselves, and not in relation to one another or to outside life. They have, to me, all the charm of those domestic animals, such as cats, which adorn and add interest to our lives and contribute to our entertainment, but who have a separate and private existence of which we know nothing. You know your cat as a comfortable purring object sitting before the fire; but when he leaves your presence he enters upon an existence probably much more interesting, of which you are quite ignorant. And so servants, who to their employers are a totally unknown and unknowable race, being divided from them by a deep, though not a wide gulf, are subjects of extremely interesting speculation. For my part, if I go to the house of a new acquaintance, I always look at the servants; their impassive faces tell me much about my host and hostess. Good masters have good servants; it is a saying as old and as true as the hills; and where the servants are careless, or bold, or impudent, or disrespectful in their manner to people in a dependent position, you will find all these qualities echoed in the master or mistress.

The servants are thus mirrors which reflect on their surfaces the lives of those who employ them; of their own lives one sees nothing. Perhaps it

is just as well that one knows so little of their points of view or of their opinions about ourselves ; nor are their secret lives necessarily as beautiful and well-ordered as are the ritual observances in which we encounter them. Those slim and well-groomed youths, with their dark hair and intelligent eyes and clear-cut features, who look like young gentlemen from the Foreign Office, have fortified themselves with beer in order to support the fatigue of waiting upon you at table, and in private, I am told, their thoughts and conversation turn much upon Butcher's Meat. That reticent and discreet woman, Madam, who is at this moment occupying herself so prettily with rolls of silk ribbon, is a very different person when she has descended to the housekeeper's room, and it would possibly make you quite ill to overhear what she says there. But her service to you is perfect, and your relationship would only be spoiled if, by any blundering accident, you were put in possession of her private point of view. A servant's point of view is generally very simple, and possibly terribly just. I once had a servant who had for many years been valet to a distinguished statesman ; but all he thought it interesting to relate about him was : ' He had a hasty temper, sir ; sometimes he would be very ugly when I went in to him of a morning.'

You see there the attitude : it is that of the

trainer to the wild beast which he manages so well. You walk before the cages with the trainer, and he tells you the different qualities of his charges; how this one is good-natured and that one greedy, and the other one dangerous if not carefully managed; and then he goes in with his bucket and mop to the cage of the dangerous one and quietly performs his task, undisturbed by the occasional snarl of the creature whom he is attending. They understand each other perfectly; it is the business of the trainer to know the character of the animal well, to know when he means, and when he does not mean, to be 'ugly,' when it is safe to go on with his business and when it is wise to retire from the cage. And my servant was like that; one saw him in imagination pausing for a moment in the chilly corridor outside his master's room, bracing his nerves as the trainer does who opens the door of a cage. Sometimes the statesman would be 'ugly when he went in of a morning,' and the trainer never knows but the lion or tiger may be waiting this time to spring upon him when he opens the cage door; but in either case it is all in the day's work. The cage has to be cleaned out, the statesman has to be awakened; and with calmness, a quiet manner, a demeanour neither timid nor aggressive, and, above all, without any sign of fear, the most dangerous animal can be handled with comparative safety.

Good servants are indeed our trainers, and order and direct our lives more than we think. Not by command, of course, but by quiet and obstinate suggestion they can make us do much that they wish. It is they who determine at what moment we shall be awakened, what the temperature of our bath shall be, often (unless we care enough about the matter to combat them) what clothes we shall wear and what we shall have to eat; they are about us, vigilant and attentive, all day; aware, from their full knowledge of our natural history and habits, of the slightest discontent or uneasiness, with the remedy for which they are instantly ready; and perhaps only at night, when we are safely shut up in our cages, do they fully relax themselves and turn their attention to more interesting things. For we, who are so interesting and important to ourselves, are probably not interesting to them, except from the trainer's or keeper's point of view; except in so far as our habits or temper make life with us easy or pleasant. The world may call you a great statesman; but what your servant will have to say about you is that you have 'a hasty temper, and are sometimes ugly when he goes in to you of a morning.'

But let some third person go into the cage with the trainer and his charge, and what happens, in nearly every case. is instant and total collapse of

the *entente* that has hitherto existed between the two; the lion falls upon the keeper, or upon the third person, or upon both. The bond has been broken. The implicit pact that one should not take advantage of the other is at once disturbed by the presence of a third party suspected of reinforcing one side against the other. Is it too far-fetched an application of my little fable to suggest that Mr. Lloyd George, in stepping in between servants and their employers, is likely to provoke the catastrophe, if not to share the fate, of the third person in the lion's cage? I am afraid it is too far-fetched; but I cannot resist the temptation to win a little sympathy by making a gibe against the most admired and the most hated man in England. He will forgive me.

THE WEEK-END PARTY

THE WEEK-END PARTY

TO live in the country, partaking of the pleasures and labours of country life through the week, and to have friends from town to stay with you over the week-end, is almost an ideal way of life, and of combining the interests of the small and the great worlds. You get the best of your friends, and the interests which they bring to your detached life prevent its peace from degenerating into stagnation. And to live in town, joining throughout the week in its loud and strenuous activities, and to retire from Saturday to Monday to the silence of some country retreat, there to quiet the nerves and slow down the pulses to their normal tune, is also an ideal condition for people whose lot it is to work in cities, or take a share in driving the great machinery of national or metropolitan life. In either case, town and country influences act as correctives of one another, preserving the sense of proportion and preventing the character from being too much drugged by quietness or stimulated by excitement.

Out of these two simple and good things has

grown that extremely complicated thing which has very little that is good about it—the smart week-end party—when some twenty people, with their paraphernalia of luggage and valets and maids, are conveyed by a nicely graduated series of trains to a country house on Saturday afternoon, and shot out again on Monday morning by another nicely graduated series. They are received by their host and hostess in the true baronial manner, as though they were indeed the inhabitants of the house; but this is an illusion. They are week-enders like their guests; and they themselves, with their valets, maids and luggage, have but arrived an hour or two before, and will depart an hour or two after, their invited visitors. There is very little that is restful or recreative in such assemblies. They consist almost entirely of people who know one another well, and who constantly meet in the same houses in town; and they are employed in very much the same occupations as have employed them during the week. The simplicity of real English country life is entirely absent. From the moment when the second, third, and fourth footmen respectively have burdened themselves with the responsibility of taking charge of your hat and stick and gloves, when the under-butler has delivered you to the groom of the chambers, when that functionary has presented you to your hostess (whom you took into dinner the night before), until

the bridge debts have been settled on Monday morning, and the last of your modest assortment of half-sovereigns, crowns and half-crowns has been pocketed by its ungrateful recipient, you are engaged in a complicated though stereotyped routine, which is refreshing neither to the body nor to the spirit. You find yourself planted in a house full of people whom you are constantly meeting in London ; you have to talk hard to them, probably about the same things which furnish the small talk of London dinner parties. You are requisitioned for games out of doors, or brought in for bridge or Coon-can (if that is the way you spell it), and generally worried with elaborate efforts to amuse which only bore. Such matters as the clothes people are wearing, and the way they play games, and the extent to which they are on Christian-name terms with the rest of the party, are matters of great importance. At dinner on Saturday the conversation is chiefly personal. 'Tell me, who is that sitting next to So-and-so ?' is a frequent conversational opening which leads by easy stages to gossip and mild scandal. On Sunday at breakfast it is about the bridge of the night before. At lunch, of the golf of the morning, mildly stimulated again to personalities by the advent of some woman who makes an effective first appearance at that meal. By dinner-time two or three unfortunate people have been tacitly selected as objects

of dislike by the rest of the party, which thus becomes consolidated in a brotherly kind of way by more or less good-natured abuse of them. And at dinner the week-end topic will have definitely asserted itself, and rule supreme. It is probably a very silly topic, and may be anything from a low beam against which tall people knock their heads to the kind of hat or other garment which some pet or butt of the party may be wearing; but it serves to pass the time until the division of the guests into bridge parties and gossiping parties. What train people are going away by is more than enough topic for breakfast the next morning; and the series of anticlimaxes is reached when at the door one takes elaborate farewell of people whom one will probably meet again at lunch or dinner the same day. In the whole entertainment is hardly any thing that is real or belonging to the life of the house. The children are either banished with their governesses to remote apartments, or allowed to play picturesquely and decorously for a little while on the lawn. The only person who really does exactly and only what he likes is the host, who perhaps selects some favoured guest to share in his own superior pursuits, and his chief duty seems to be discharged when, with hearty and genial enthusiasm, he tells you about the trains back to town.

It may be objected that if one does not like such

parties, one need not go to them. Certainly any hard-worked man who frequents them habitually must prefer the society of his acquaintances to that of his friends, and be rather foolish into the bargain ; for he has to work as hard at them as he does in town. But one may criticisc other people's pleasures as well as one's own, and I am considering these parties from the point of view of the people who are the real mainstay of them ; people, who as a rule, are not hardworking, the problem of whose lives is chiefly the problem of their pleasures, and who are able to devote themselves entirely to extracting as much amusement as possible out of life. For these people the week-end party, which is full of interest and novelty for the onlooker, seems to me to be a mistake. It does not seem to be worth spending four hours in the train to play the same games and meet the same people as you play and meet amid the greater conveniences of London. It is unnecessary to say that the standard of material luxury in houses where such functions are held is such as would stagger any one who looked upon it with detachment of mind, and considered what it really meant. But even from the week-ender's point of view a change of diet would surely be both agreeable and beneficial, and his palate and his digestive organs would alike appreciate a rest from the rich sauces and the eternal champagne and port of his everyday existence.

But nowadays, to go from London to the country in such circumstances, is like emigrating from the Carlton to the Ritz.

This kind of entertainment needs more skill to make it tolerable than almost any other; yet it is indulged in chiefly by people who bring no great intelligence or trouble to bear upon it, and leave its organisation almost entirely to their servants. In my own limited knowledge only one English hostess has made a complete success of it; and she really lives in the country, and has inherited the art of blending people of quite different occupations and habits, so that visitors to her house can always be sure not only of making new acquaintances, but of meeting people whom they do not meet in their ordinary round; and her house is constantly the birthplace of many lasting interests and friendships. For that reason it has become an institution quite unique in English life, and may be said, with very slight exaggeration, to have a national rather than a merely social influence. It is as far removed as possible from the kind of party which I am describing, where the guests are merely gathered in the great drag-net of London, and assembled without selection or discrimination. Contrast such an entertainment with the ideal visit to friends in the country, where amid familiar scenes and familiar people a fagged brain may really rest and refresh itself and be

absorbed for a little, not into some feverish and organised entertainment, but into the quieter and saner life of the people of the house. The peace and dignity of family life in the country is one of the last remaining glories of English society; it is life brought to perfection, where children grow up amid ideal conditions, their duties and pleasures equally harmonious with their state and environment, and the life of the house providing an atmosphere, the breathing of which is restorative, and access to which is an intimate privilege. The wise man selects for his week-end holiday the house where such an atmosphere exists, where the people are friends and not mere acquaintances, where no elaborate efforts are made to amuse him, and where the only demand made upon him is a tolerable one of making a tour of the 'improvements.'

As for the smart week-enders, I think that it would be a benefit to society generally if they remained in London. The old London social Sunday was a not unpleasant day, with its informal visiting of people otherwise hardly ever seen, and its pleasant impromptu dinner-parties, its cognisance even of such institutions as churches and concerts. It was supposed to be dull; but that was only because it was quiet. It was not nearly so dull as the smart week-end party in the country.

THE CHILDREN'S PARTY

THE CHILDREN'S PARTY

IT is one of the proud boasts of our time that we really understand children. They have emerged from the dark clouds of error and misconception which enfolded them in the Victorian era, and are now basking in the sunshine of our perfect comprehension. The fact that we ourselves have survived the ignorant treatment of our parents without being utterly warped and soured is felt to be due to certain invincible qualities in ourselves; our natures are beautiful in spite of, and not because of, our mothers' care. Please God, we say, our own children shall run no such risks. And yet it is an odd fact that many of us discover the virtues of our parents at the same time as we realise the possibilities of our children. Our fathers and mothers, we feel, were exceptional people; nay, must have been, or else how—? That their natures should have survived the terrible ignorance of our grandparents is even a greater mystery than the other; but the times were different, we feel; it was easier for a child to grow up in 'those days.' Anyhow, the cult of the

Parent is contemporary with the cult of the Child, and is of less significance; for our parents have a way of surviving our spasmodic attentions, and continuing on their way, grateful and fatigued; whereas the child can be made to walk in our way, and to bear throughout his life the indelible marks of our wise or foolish handling.

It is a fact that twenty-five years ago the children of well-to-do people were often in danger from parental neglect; it is at least possible that to-day children of the same class are in danger from a too aggressive attention. In the dark ages of our grandparents women of the upper-middle class, once they were married, settled down to a routine of child-bearing, house-minding, and family-ruling; they gave up the pomps and vanities of the world; they devoted their lives to their children; and of such great sacrifices, reader, may you and I have been the fruit. But women of that class do not now forsake the world when they are married. Rather they enter it, and go on from strength to strength, adding to society the indubitable attractions of the young married woman. We are greedier of life now, I think, than we were, or rather we are greedier of public and social life, and neglectful of those quieter but far fuller and deeper kinds of experience that lie behind dull veils of duty and devotion. But we are also becoming conscientious. We know it is bad citizenship to

neglect our children; and since we do not propose to depart this public and social life on their account, we have to devise some means of bringing them into it. Hence the cult of the child; hence the child-play, written for grown-up people; hence the child-book, written by young bachelor journalists; hence the child review, written by eugenically-minded professors with frustrated procreative tendencies; hence the elaboration of the children's party.

The real children's party is one of the happiest things in the life of a happy child; a party at which there are games, and certain essential forms of food at supper, of which the most delectable are trifle and jam-sandwich. These may be glorified by the addition of certain elegant and decorative comestibles, so that your party shall conform to the standards of a small friend of mine who, upon being bidden, asked 'Will it be a jelly-party?' And the innocent and foolish games, at which the stiffest and most priggish child must grow hot and unbend—who does not remember them? 'Brother, I'm bobbed,' Dumb Crambo, Cross Questions, Forfeits, 'My master has sent me unto you,' Russian Scandal, Simon Says, The Stage Coach, Stool of Repentance—these are only a few of the delectable names that have thrilled so many little hearts and pleasantly wearied so many little bodies, and in so many little souls

consolidated the triple life of joy, giving pleasure in anticipation, in realisation, and in remembrance.

But that is not the fashion of to-day. The simple jelly-party is mocked at—not by the children, but by the elders, who do not find it sufficiently amusing. For the feature of the present child-cult is the discovery that children, instead of being tiresome, noisy, and untidy objects, are interesting and amusing, and have their place, like the Russian Ballet, Prince's, and costume balls, in a wise and well-ordered life. On to the stage with them, then; drill them, dress them, rehearse them, so that they may perform for us. Now dressing up, if played by children for their own pleasure, is a great game; but being dressed up for other people's is quite another thing. But children can be used as ornaments; they are 'decorative'; so instead of their stiff but thrilling party clothes, they must be sent forth in apparel from the costumiers, with swords and feathers and trains, in which they cannot romp or play. Little Willy Johnson must not be Willy Johnson, but Perkin Warbeck, or one of the little Princes in the Tower, or a Babe in the Wood, or Peter Pan, doomed to an evening of Barrieisms and Wendy-worship. Those weary little Romeos, longing to take off their plumed hats; those sad little Henry-the-Eighths, perspiring beneath their wadding; those embittered little Alices or Red

Riding Hoods, weeping because another and richer child has a finer costume in the same character—there is no pity for them; they are no longer players but performers, making their contribution to the craze for amateur pageantry.

And then there are the presents—sources of endless hidden woes and heartburnings. The cotillon, or the Christmas tree, is crowned by elaborate and expensive gifts, that cannot all be equally desirable, and that therefore cannot fail to cause longing, envy, jealousy, and disappointment. Have people forgotten how frightfully sensitive children are to anything like social inequality, or how the darts of snobbishness can stab, that they can thus multiply the occasions of them? A child who cannot give to her friends a party as 'good' as she received, is, to some extent, an unhappy child, and to the same extent a victim to the selfishness of her elders.

What is the result? An acquaintance of mine, who gave a party at which the oldest guest was sixteen, has been complaining bitterly ever since. There was champagne; and severe criticisms were passed by the guests either on the brand or the vintage. I am not sure which; but I think the grievance was that he had given them 1904 instead of 1900 wine.

THE PUTTING ON OF APPAREL

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THERE is nothing so natural and amusing to the really childish spirit as dressing-up; it is part of the romance of childhood, the first excursion into drama; and has no doubt been so enjoyed since the children of Eve made garlands of differently coloured flowers and clothed themselves in autumnal leaves. But there is another kind of dressing-up which the fashionable world in London has been cultivating lately with increasing seriousness, which is not simple; which is feverish and complicated, and is the result of the passion for more and more elaborate amusement by which modern society is possessed. Modern people in a high state of civilisation can no longer be happy within themselves; they have constantly to escape from themselves; and, like the dose of the drunkard or eater of drugs, which must constantly be increased, the machinery necessary to provide the smart world with an evening's so-called amusement becomes more and more formidable and complicated. Terrified, and perhaps incapable, of being merely themselves, people

constantly seek to become something or somebody other than themselves; and have latterly been reduced to the expedient of costume balls, where a gentleman who in everyday life suffers from the disadvantage of having a long nose, and whose person is what Barry Pain calls 'an unseemly mixture of the puny and the portly,' can pretend to be a cardinal, and where a fat man can assume a brief dignity by calling himself Henry VIII.

There is no harm in that, though there is not lacking a certain pathos in the almost instinctive impulse to pretend to be some one else if one wishes to be beautiful or dignified. One of the things for which society has to thank the late King Edward was the frank cultivation of beauty in dress and surroundings; and Englishwomen undoubtedly can and do make a very beautiful show indeed in their more elaborate social functions. But this has ceased to be enough. Still searching for beauty honestly and zealously enough, they think that it can only be further cultivated by the reversion to the clothes of other periods; although there is no effect of beauty in the costume of any period which women of to-day could not, if they wished, incorporate in the fashions of their ordinary attire.

Beside the love of beauty, however, there exists an ugly and very sinister shadow — the love of advertisement. The costume balls which

have recently been held in London were externally very elaborate scenes of colour and of costume, but internally they were a disagreeable mixture of vain-glory, jealousy, and social advertisement. They were also, incidentally, a riot of extravagance undertaken in the name of causes which could not have benefited to the extent of one twenty-fifth part of the money expended, and to which very few of the 'guests' at the balls would have been induced to contribute a penny in the ordinary way. I doubt if most of them even knew the name of the cause which they were supposed to be supporting. It was enough that the set of so-called royal quadrilles afforded an opportunity for advertisement which was too good to be neglected. The newspapers fanned the general excitement; it became necessary for everybody who was anybody to have a place in one of these parties, and for women who were beautiful to exhibit and advertise their beauty in as public and spectacular a way as possible.

This is a serious thing to say, nor do I expect the people who frequent these gay scenes to agree with me; but the greater part of London society cannot be acquitted of yielding to a love of advertisement which is utterly destructive of true dignity and which is wholly opposed to their traditions. This is a moment in which the English aristocracy is being put upon trial for its very life;

when it is being required to justify its existence; when it is being asked to render an account of the great stewardship which it has held; and it is emphatically not the moment for such a society to exhibit and advertise its almost unprecedented capacity for extravagance and splendour. The splendour we can take for granted; it exists, not in Albert Hall balls, but throughout the length and breadth of England; but the advertisement of both cannot but have a disastrous effect on those inconvenient millions of the population who merely look on and ask themselves what it all means. The newspaper lists of names of people taking part in the Albert Hall quadrilles may seem a small and harmless thing, but to me it is a sign of decadence and vulgarity. If people really loved dancing and dressing-up for its own sake by all means let them do it; but why send their names to the papers? There is a reason for everything that people do. What was the reason for this? I am afraid there was no reason except advertisement—the same reason which permits such an affront on the privacy of life as the publication week after week in illustrated papers of portraits of the wives and daughters of distinguished men. I think England is the only European country in which women of distinguished family dream of allowing their beauty to be exploited in the public press; and it is only one, although by no means the least

unhappy and undignified, of the influences that have reached us from America.

The passion for dressing-up necessarily extended at the time of the Coronation to the streets and public buildings. The one really magnificent act of dressing-up—that within the walls of Westminster Abbey—was unfortunately invisible to the public. But the general passion expended itself on masts and flags and coloured cloths. The Coronation dressing-up of London was interesting because of its extreme elaborateness, its general effect of meretricious brilliancy and its complete artistic futility. Here, again, nothing was individual or spontaneous; it was all the work of the contractor, and bore the imprint of his jaded invention. It was not simple because the contractor could not get high prices for arranging a simple decoration; and being elaborate it was not beautiful, because it had neither the *naïveté* of enthusiasm nor the elaborate beauty of the work of an artist. What did the poor contractor do? He covered everything (at so much a yard) with cloth, red or blue or yellow! sometimes he made a flat surface and sometimes he draped it into things like bags, and he adorned it all with festoons and edgings of a substance that looked like miles of yellow worms. And then there were G.R. and M.R. and crowns and rampant lions. There was one house in Piccadilly which had large

moulded substances like sausages suspended in front of its balconies. I do not know what they were, but I am sure they must have been products of Empire, as they were shown against a background of overseas green. And then there were Union Jacks, but not nearly enough of them; for they are among the most effective decorations in the world, and really national.

If you looked at these decorations as a whole you could not but be struck by the disproportion between the means employed and the effect produced. Here, again, unhappily advertisement comes in. The innocent person might suppose that these emblems in Piccadilly and St. James's Street were all greetings to the King and Queen, but in fact they were nearly all advertisements of something—advertisements sometimes explicit, but more often tacit. They did not really say 'God Save the King'; they said 'This is the smartest shop, this is the most exclusive hotel, this is the best club, and we are the richest people, in Piccadilly or St. James's.' The result of this is rivalry instead of co-operation; the decorations fight and clash with each other. One can imagine how Paris would dress itself up for an occasion like this, and how artists would be called to design some simple and quite harmonious scheme of colour in which whole streets would be treated at once with beauty and simplicity. But we leave it all to the contractor,

who is thus called upon to carry a load greater than he can bear. The Bond Street scheme revealed at once the extent and the limitations of his devices. It was one of the few streets treated according to a consistent scheme. The thoroughfare was spanned with ropes supporting garlands meeting in the centre round imitation picture frames such as are used to enclose miniatures. The contractor had the happy thought of adorning these, not with portraits, but with names—any names that occurred to him, apparently, and in any order, for four in succession which remain in my memory were: Handel, India, Scott, Pitt. I did not see either the words Overseas, Canada, Prairie, or Commonwealth—but I daresay if the street were long enough these would have been added.

After all dressing-up there remains the highly dreary and disagreeable business of undressing, of putting away the tinsel crowns and yellow worms and yards of Turkey red; of dismembering those mighty timber structures that look as though they were meant to last for ever; of putting back the windows that have been taken out, and of watching those armies of workmen who have been hammering and sawing so briskly during a busy fortnight now lazily and with maddening deliberation slowly undo the work of their own hands. The undressing process lasts long; all the enthusiasm and hope of gain has gone out of it, and it is perhaps possible

then to count the cost and find out who really reaps the benefit of all this costly fuss. The carpenters benefited, and the decorators and the upholsterers and the electricians; I wonder who else? The State function of the Coronation was the only fine and beautiful thing in the whole business. The rest may be regarded as a species of commercial pandemonium stirred up and kept going by the newspapers in their own interests and the interests of their advertisers. This is not a popular thing to say, but it is what a good many people thought.

The reign of King George v. was inaugurated amid apprehensions (so far unjustified) of considerable social rigours. But if personal advertisement could be made unfashionable (it can never be made unprofitable), and sharp divisions drawn between love of the beautiful and love of the conspicuous, between loyalty and toadying, between Imperialism and Jingoism, between intrinsic beauty and that outward adorning which consists in plaiting of the hair and wearing of gold and putting on of apparel, we might arrive a little nearer to that hidden man of the heart which, in nations as in men, is of great price.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

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IT is different from any other afternoon; it has a different melancholy; as different from the dire and squalid gloom of Saturday afternoon as Sunday, which I always think of as showing a glossy black amid the spectroscope of the days, is different from the pale yellow ochre of Saturday. The sense of Sunday will be one of the last things to die in a race that has sat under the shade of Puritanism, and even those people who have never observed the rites of any religion are subject to strange recurring qualms every seventh day, and will be pricked by the desire to do something on that day which is different from their ordinary occupations. It needs no bell or calendar to tell the Anglo-Saxon that it is Sunday; and even if he has forgotten it for the first few hours of the day, it will find him out towards three o'clock in the afternoon. On ships far out at sea, on the burning sands of the desert, on the wide African veldt, in trains storming across the continents, men are every week suddenly remembering that it is Sunday afternoon. I do not know how it may be with others, but with me the sensation is a depressing one. In fact, the whole week-end is a very

dangerous time. Things which would be grasshoppers on Monday or Wednesday, become burdens on Saturday or Sunday. The attack sets in with acute symptoms early on Saturday afternoon, when in certain quarters of any town there is a change in the note of the traffic, a kind of empty resonance, in which the dreadful clangour of the barrel-organ echoes unchecked. You remember that it is Saturday afternoon, and therefore a rest for hundreds of thousands of toiling people, and you ought to be happy at the thought; but somehow the thought does not make you happy. Then is the time that I am first threatened with panic. What am I doing this afternoon and this evening, and to-morrow afternoon and to-morrow evening? A chasm separates me from Monday, when the wheel of life will begin to turn again; and if no one has thrown a bridge for me across it I am certain to be engulfed.

That there is something universal in these symptoms is shown by the pains people have taken to relieve them; even for people who do not go to church there remains the instinct to do something regularly on Sundays. Hence the Sunday concert, which for so many people fills the unconfessed, but none the less uncomfortable, gap left by a cessation of public devotional ceremonies. The audiences at the Queen's Hall and the Albert Hall on Sunday afternoons are not audiences so much as congre-

gations. They have the demeanour of congregations, and they are congregations of a different religious persuasion. Queen's Hall is inclined to be High Church; the Albert Hall is undoubtedly Low Church; indeed, the appearance of the pavement outside after the concert is over, black with a multitude of respectable people who have finished digesting a heavy dinner, and are going home to eat a heavy tea, is like that outside some vast temple of dissent. But there the analogy ends; the music inside is happily free from any taint of the atmosphere which it is meant to relieve; and for thousands of people in London there is at least one hour in which Sunday afternoon is robbed of its terrors.

Yet even here one is in continual danger of the black dog. The mere fact that one so often sits in a certain place on Sunday afternoon, and hears certain music, becomes dangerous for the music. What if one were to associate it definitely with Sunday afternoons? Its charm and beauty would be gone; it would merely call up in one's mind visions of the Albert Memorial or Langham Place, the frock-coats that still seem to linger in the fashions of the Albert Hall congregations, and the unbridged gulf between now and Monday morning. But happily the music resists these dread influences, partly because at both concerts it is so extremely well chosen. I do not know whether they are aware of it, but the compilers of these programmes

have an infinitely more difficult task than they have when they make programmes for any other concerts. Are they aware of what they have to fight against? Does Sir Henry Wood ever say to himself, 'This will do for Wednesday evening, but it will never do for Sunday afternoon?' Consciously or unconsciously, I think he must; because, although his programmes have nearly always the spirit of afternoon, they never have the spirit of Sunday afternoon.

And what is this spirit? In my case, I am pretty sure that one reason for its depressing influence is that my childish memories of Sunday afternoon are chiefly memories of things forbidden. In the country especially, by the sea, my childish impression was generally that Sunday afternoon was a time terribly wasted. It seems always, moreover, to have been absurdly fine; the rain might pour or a gale blow on Saturday night or Monday morning, but the Sundays of my childhood seem always to have been of a superlative beauty, steeped in sunshine and stillness—days perfectly adapted for doing all the pleasant things forbidden on Sundays. I remember coming out of church and finding the tide brimming up to an unwonted height, the sea like glass, and the stones of the shore visible through the green water to a depth of several feet; the boats dreaming uselessly at their moorings, and all the little creeks and coves among

the rocks, navigable only at high water of spring tides, perforce unvisited by my exploring keel. To Sunday afternoon also seems to belong that memory of the great heat stored up in the woodwork of a boat lying on the beach, and of the unwonted feeling of treading on the shifting pebbles on the beach in patent-leather Sunday shoes. The feeling, moreover, that a wet rope was a thing that might damage or soil one's clothes, was a feeling entirely associated with Sunday. My further grudge against these summer Sundays of long ago is that on those days I was a child ravished from my sea pursuits, and forced to inland occupations; obliged to contemplate the flowers in walled gardens, and take walks over rolling turf and amid groves of trees, from which not even a view of the sea could be obtained. Church I accepted as inevitable and (granted the necessity of going there at all) not without interests of its own; but the waste of the sunshine and the high tide out of doors was a thing that seemed unreasonable and unjustifiable. It is curious how false one's memory may be, for, as in my recollection the Sundays were always fine, so was the tide always brim high about one o'clock—a thing impossible in nature. And I remember no Sunday afternoon which had that empty feeling, caused by the tide being low and the shore ugly with misshapen and unfamiliar sea-weeds, that made even the sea distasteful during week-day hours.

But I am grateful for the rule which obliged me to do different things on Sundays from what I did on other days. I cannot help thinking that the modern fashion of allowing children to do only what they like is a bad one, for there are many things which children are glad in after years to have done, which they would never do of their own choice and initiative. Among these, perhaps, the restrictions of Sunday and the apparent waste of its golden afternoons may be counted. Something still and shining hovers on the horizon of memory where they lie; something that punctuated and divided life, solemnly perhaps, but simply and not unhappily. I was reminded of it when I saw in a visitors' book in a little inn in Cornwall the verses in which Professor Blackie had sung the praises of Mary Munday's hospitality, enjoyed by him in that little cottage inn that lies between Mullion church and the sea: a place half hidden in the angle of the road, where the church dreams in a peace as of the eternal Sabbath, and no rumour or drift of spray from the shouting sea ever reaches the sheltered graveyard.

'And I advise you all to hold
By the well-tried things that are good and old,
Like this old house of Munday:
The old church and the old inn,
And the old way to depart from sin
By going to church on Sunday,'

—or (a doubtful substitute) by going to the Carlton and the Albert Hall.

HOLIDAYS AND CONSCIENCE

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THE great drawback to a life of leisure is that the true holiday is almost impossible in it; and the chief disadvantage of being one's own master is that one hardly ever knows the joys of freedom. For such a man there is practically no escape from servitude or from the eye of the master, who in his case is his own conscience. And perhaps the supreme defect of the literary man's life is that he hardly ever has a real holiday. I do not speak of the writer whose pen is hired or devoted to the service of some special interest, for his subject is always there waiting for him, and he may go away and forget about it, and return to deal with whatever it may provide. But the writer pure and simple, the writer by nature, that is to say, is in quite a different case. His mind is a mill which is always working; life and experience of every kind are the material with which it works; and so long as he lives, the curious process of manufacturing literature out of life is going on. It is not, as the layman fondly thinks, that he is always on the look-out for 'copy' and

'local colour,' which are mere commercial nicknames applied by outsiders to parts of the fabric which he is always weaving. It is quite automatically, and without any special exercise of will, that he looks upon life and experience almost entirely as they affect his occupation as a writer. But like a peasant in a remote country whose fire must be kept up by fuel gathered wherever it may be found, who dare not pass a dry stick on the roadside without picking it up, the writer dare not, or rather cannot, abstain from gathering and storing the odds and ends of experience that lie in his path. His storehouse may be full and overflowing now; but a day may come when for some reason he is prevented from frequenting the highways of life, and when he must live on his store. So, although he may sometimes have a rest, he hardly ever has a holiday.

The only true spirit in which to start on a holiday is the spirit of release from bondage. The free man of means and leisure who suddenly says, 'I will go on my yacht to the Mediterranean,' or, 'I will go to Norway and fish,' does not know what a holiday is. He may enjoy sport, he may enjoy travel, he may delight in looking on strange and beautiful scenes; but he is not having a holiday. No mere volition is strong enough to carry one into that region, but only some powerful influence akin to that of the release of a catapult, the sudden

removal of restraints, can shoot you into that realm of absolute freedom. And, on the whole, I am glad that it is so, for it means that holidays are reserved for people who need them most. The clerk who sits for eleven months on a stool in the bondage of an office, surrounded by the musty sights and smells of ledgers and invoice books; the Cabinet Minister who for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four has no minute in which he may do merely what he wants to do; the school teacher, the typist, the hard-worked parson, the servant and slave everywhere, slave either of great causes or little people, know, when the day comes on which they can look forward to a clear fortnight or month of freedom, the true joys of a holiday. And hardly any one else, except children at school, knows anything about it at all.

It is not where you go that matters to the reality of a holiday; it is not even what you take with you in the way of financial or other equipment for amusement; it is what you leave behind. You must leave care behind; whatever the burden you carry, it must be rolled off your back before you set out; otherwise there is no holiday. And it is often not until a good half of life has been passed, and many holidays wasted, that one learns to give some little attention to this business of loosening the burden, and realises that if care is not to accompany you, some considerable effort of will

must be exercised to detach the cords that bind you to it, and see that it is secured from following you ; for care is a dog that has a wonderful instinct for travel, and, although you may think you have left him safely chained up at home, he may suddenly turn up beside you in most distant and inaccessible places. And I think that one of the things that make real holidays so charming and beneficial is that people do exercise their will beforehand, and make, if only once in the year, a resolution to enjoy themselves as much as possible for a fortnight or a month. True, they might do this at almost any time and without going away ; but the simple fact is that they do not. Ritual helps us in everything ; and it is a fact that the business of packing trunks or looking at timetables, negotiating with agents and landlords, catching trains, making uncomfortable journeys, spending considerable sums of money, being cut off for a time from most of the things on which they believe themselves to be dependent, are all of very real assistance to people in their annual determination to enjoy themselves.

When I was a child I used to have real holidays three times a year. A little later there was at least one holiday time in the year for me ; but since, after many experiments, I decided that the control of my life must be wholly in my own hands and no one's else, I have hardly had a holiday at all. And this is a thing which any one looking

at the merely external facts of my existence would hardly believe. I have been half over the world in the most delightful places, in the most agreeable and fortunate circumstances, in the pleasantest company; and I have not had a holiday. I have gone away for three months and escaped from an English winter to live in one of the most beautiful tropical islands of the world, and done not one stroke of work in that time; and yet it was not a holiday, and, simply from that point of view, not to be compared with a 'bus conductor's week at Southend. I have stayed in beautiful places with nothing to do but what I chose to do; and people have envied me and said, 'What a wonderful time you must have had; and how well and fit you must feel, and how ready for work after your holiday.' And the real fact has been that I have been worn out, and seriously in need of a week's real holiday. All this, I admit, is largely due to bad management. If I had said to myself 'I will go away for three months to the Tropics and take a real holiday and do nothing at all,' it would have done me a world of good and set me up for years. But I dared not say such a thing; I could not afford to take a holiday for three months; and every day I said to myself 'To-morrow I will set to work'; but I did not. Every day, seeing and experiencing something new, and finding myself on the verge of unexplored worlds, my mental

machinery was working double time and packing and storing away all the new experiences which I was meeting. And at the end of the time, although I had written nothing, I was tired out with packing and storing, and had come away with a mental freight various and wonderful indeed, but quite useless to me until the hour should strike when I should need it, when it would matter greatly to my work that I knew all those things instead of being ignorant of them.

This, of course, is a disease. If I were to live to be two hundred I could never fully exhaust half the experiences which I have acquired. I am like a man who should begin to erect a factory on twenty acres of ground, and who should reserve a quarter of an acre for the erection of a little fifty horse-power engine, and devote the remaining nineteen and three-quarter acres to storing coal to run it with, and then, when he had any spare time, go out and gather sticks by the roadside in case his fuel should run short. I attribute the disease almost entirely to Puritan ancestry and the possession of a conscience. If I am really enjoying myself and forgetting everything but the fact of enjoyment, some chill and ghostly voice from the past tells me that there must be something wrong if I am enjoying myself so much, and that so much delight cannot be a really good thing. If I am sitting on a bank looking at a river, or experiencing

idle contentment in any other perfectly natural and harmless way, my conscience awakes and says 'Why should you not be working? If you were to sit down now and write something you would get money for it; and you know that you ought to get money, and that if you do not get money and go on getting it and never cease from getting it as long as you live, you will starve or, what would be worse, go about shabbily dressed, so that your friends, fearing that you may be in need of some assistance, will avoid your eye.' This is quite true; I really feel like that, and I resent it most bitterly. I can, and sometimes do, work very hard, work at very high pressure and put a great deal of vitality, of my measurable and finite quantity of life, into what I have to do; and I resent very much that my conscience gives me no credit for this, but occupies the time after the work is done, when I should be relaxing and enjoying myself, in nagging at me with the question: 'Well, what are you going to do next, and when are you going to begin?' And sometimes when all other forms of torment have failed, my conscience (which does not like holidays, but refuses to remain behind when I try to take them) will suddenly say 'Well, why aren't you enjoying yourself? This is a holiday, you know; you can't always have holidays; why aren't you making the most of it and being merry and bright?'

I suppose the only way in which I could enjoy a holiday would be, first, that I could be sure of the companionship I most cared for; second, that not only should all my expenses be paid, but that I should actually be paid so much per day for taking a holiday, so that I could feel that I was earning money by enjoying myself; and thirdly, that I should be guaranteed at the end of the holiday a return to a life of honourable toil, and be free from want for the rest of my days. Otherwise, when I am sitting in the sun outside the workhouse at the age of seventy-six, waiting for the visitors to bring me tobacco, there would be an opening for my conscience to say 'Ah, if you had not taken that holiday, and wasted your time and money, you would not be here now.'

But I have not yet entirely given up the hope of so flouting and trampling upon my conscience that I shall one day be able to have a real holiday.

GOING AWAY AND ARRIVING

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THE act of Going Away, in the case of a whole family making an annual migration, is a very important part of a holiday. In the case of simple people who have neither great establishments nor large means, it is a thing fraught with a certain amount of careful apprehension; to the elders it is a serious matter, complicated by questions of packing, of dealings with servants, or arrangements for shutting up or carefully maintaining the house during their absence; but for children it is quite another thing. It is the most exciting part of the holiday, in which the joys of travel and adventure are combined in a highly concentrated form. It is surrounded by rites and ceremonies, and crowned with the knowledge that beyond it lie the delights of the holiday itself. To appreciate the true joys of Going Away one must be a child in a family whose annual migration is a thing long looked forward to as the supreme delight of the year.

My own memory of Going Away in this manner lies like a golden haze on the most distant part of

life that I can remember. I associate it with that sense of exhausted summer experienced in large towns towards the end of July ; with an approaching emptiness and suspension of the ordinary affairs of life, and with the alien's sense of quitting the place of his bondage and returning to his native land. For England, although the greater part of my year was spent in it, was associated in my youth with the drab side of life ; with going to school, and with a disagreeable sense of false position caused by living constantly among rich and, if the truth be told, somewhat Philistine people, whose simple way it was to estimate others by the amount of money which they had ; whom superiority of attainment or of cultivation rendered uncomfortable, and who were glad to find any ground from which they could look down on their superiors. And as the end of July approached we, as children, had a growing sense that we had dwelt too long in Meseeh and had our habitation in the tents of Kedar. We were going back to our own land and our own people, and we were glad.

Our Going Away took place very properly on a Monday. The Saturday preceding it was a day of disturbance and unrest, when the ordinary order of things was suspended, and one was thrilled by the sight of the various large trunks standing about in the fairway of corridors and landings. It was on Saturday, or sometimes even on Friday, that

we began to repeat a rhyme or chant used only on these occasions. It was as follows :

> 'This time three days where shall we be?
> In the steamer going to ——.'

The missing word supplied the rhyme ; and it was considered creditable and effective if one of us, by making elaborate calculation, could suddenly foreshadow one of the more thrilling moments of the journey by saying :

> 'This time twenty-five hours where shall we be?
> Standing-on-the-quay-waiting-for-the-mail-car, going to ——.'

Saturday evening passed in a kind of wretched reaction and serious searching of heart as to how the whole of Sunday and Monday could possibly be got through. Church on Sunday was a little exciting because of the thinned condition of the congregation ; one had an infinite pity for the wretched handful who should remain at the mercy of a succession of casual and unknown ministrants. All packing was of course suspended on Sunday ; the trunks gaped invitingly, and sometimes a toy would be surreptitiously inserted among the folds of garments, only to be discovered and ejected on the following day. On Sunday evening there was a touching and somewhat sentimental feeling in the air, stimulated by the long sunshine slanting in through the windows, my father's last sermon,

the familiar hymns dedicated by custom to this occasion, and (in one mind at least) associated, not with the Deity, but with cabs and railway trains. One could almost have wept. And so to bed, and another sick night of suspense.

We did not leave till about seven in the evening; but for my part I was always ready and waiting to get into my overcoat by about nine in the morning. Things really began to happen in the morning. Our excitement was constantly being quelled by elders who walked about with furrowed brows and attempted to keep calm. Servants were engaged upon unfamiliar jobs, and we took our meals with our loins girded, noting an absence of familiar table furniture. Various humble dependants came to the house to be paid, and as we spoke to them of our imminent departure we were filled, I know not why, with a sense of pathos. We felt sorry for them, that they should thus be looking on us for the last time; and we had a strange, thrilling sense of importance, as of people who should claim the attention and the privileges of the death-bed. As the afternoon wore on there was a difficulty in breathing and total loss of appetite, which, strange to say, was treated almost as an offence. The moment when the first trunk was brought downstairs was generally the scene of a demonstration and, probably, of a reprimand; and it was at this time that agonising secret dis-

cussions began as to how we should sit in the 'bus, who, if any, should go on the box, whether it would be a fine night, and if we should be allowed to stay up late on the steamer. Half an hour before the time of departure the hideous chill of apprehension arose as to what would happen if the 'bus did not come, and the scout detailed to station himself on the road, scanning every vehicle, received one bitter disappointment after another. But at last it arrived, being greeted, according to ritual, with a quotation from an early story-book, 'It comes, it rolls up to the door.'

Now indeed we were in the very act and article of departure. One could have embraced the driver as he came to help down with the boxes; we wanted to draw him aside and tell him about the joys that were waiting for us; for surely he must be aware that this was no ordinary station job, but the homeward flight of remarkable people to the most wonderful paradise on earth. This was one of the occasions on which one shook hands with servants, and was strangely aware of the texture of their skin. And at last, every parcel being counted, and every child tightly clinging to some minor piece of luggage, the door was shut with a bang, the wheels scraped the road, and we were off, hoping to pass on the road some of our acquaintances who were not going away.

Followed the more awful excitement of the rail-

way station, when we were brigaded into various parties and given posts to guard while the business of taking tickets and seats was transacted. There was no play about it now; we were off in earnest amid the grim realities of trains and engines; and our excitement took on an almost fearful thrill, as though we had started some tremendous machine which we could not stop. The great delight of the railway journey was the obvious light-heartedness of my father; his method of counting the luggage to see that it was all there; the tones in which he announced the stations which were passed, which would not have seemed real if any one else had spoken them; and it was a part of the ritual, all unknown to him, that as we approached our port of embarkation he should let down the window and make some remark on the state of the weather or the sea. For a more sober interest now began to overcast our excitements; we were not all good sailors; and on the state of the weather would depend our happiness or misery for the next eight hours. But I remember these occasions chiefly as being associated with calm weather, and long sunsets, and the faint, salt smell of the sea across the darkness.

The next thrill on the pilgrimage was when, disembarking from the train and beginning to tramp through a succession of echoing boarded passages, we first caught sight of the legend in huge letters

TO THE STEAMER. I do not know why such notices should enter so deeply into one's sense of life ; but so long as I live I shall remember the almost intolerable tremor of being with which I read these legends, and with what a sense of glorious fate I followed the pointing wooden hand with which they were punctuated. And then at last the gangway, and the deck of the steamer, and the lights shining from the companion-way, and the weird smell which made one clench one's teeth as one descended the stairs (for this was before the day of universal electric lights and fans), the finding of one's cabin and the depositing therein of one's small effects, the desire to be in every part of the ship at once lest one should miss anything, the glorious vibration of the foghorn's note in the pit of one's stomach when it announced our departure, and the moment at which one could say ' We are off.' And then the tramping up and down the deck, the watching of the winking buoys sliding by, the returning to peep down the companion ladder, and the coming back to find that one's teeth were still firmly clenched. Every one of these experiences was a joy in itself. And down in the saloon was a pleasant clatter of knives and forks, and the appetising smells of hot meats, after which my young stomach lusted, although I was obliged to be content with an expurgated meal of tea and toast and jam.

And then once more on deck, we men, tightly buttoned up now, one's mother and sisters safely tucked away in their cabins whence good and reassuring news came of their estate, to walk up and down in the lee of the most interesting, fascinating, and all-powerful father in holiday mood, looking at the blinking lighthouse that seemed to come no nearer, until the wind began to bite and the eyes, in spite of all efforts of the will, to close. To turn in was delayed as long as possible, for it meant the end of Going Away; there was but a bridge of sleep before one would enter into to-morrow with all its joys.

But if Going Away was the most glorious part of the holidays of childhood, Arriving was the most purely joyous. The excitement of Going Away was tinged with the apprehension which, pleasant or unpleasant, is inseparable from the beginning of any great enterprise, and was shadowed by a sense of perils and adventures by land and sea to be encountered before the end was reached. But on arriving these things were all behind us; it was a crescendo of pleasures; they did not end, but were simply merged in a succession of joys, a vista of delight of which even the visible horizon did not mark the end. In short, Going Away happened at night, and Arriving happened in the morning; and in that statement is contained the whole essential difference between the two.

Arriving began by one's waking up in the small hours of the morning and wondering where one was, and gradually becoming aware that one was indeed in the cabin of the ship and travelling in the midst of the sea. The great question was how soon one could get up. The view from the porthole probably revealed only a grey waste of waters. One hardly dared to look at the time for fear it should be some dreadful hour like three or four o'clock—a hopeless hour, at which it was quite useless to get up. One lay trying to go to sleep again, or, failing that, determined to lie still for an hour by sheer effort of will; and when one looked at the clock again it was but five minutes later. Sometimes one would try to persuade oneself that four o'clock was quite a reasonable hour to get up, and, having dressed, find one's way up on decks that were either deserted and very wet, or else in process of being washed down, so that there was no dry spot to sit upon. No land being visible, and the air being probably bitterly cold, and the sun not risen, the most sanguine temperament failed to support such conditions, and one would come down again and make another effort to sleep, repeating these experiments until one did sleep in earnest, and woke up with a shock to find that the green shores of Ireland were visible, that the sun had risen, and that other people had been up for quite a long time. How sweet the air was, how green seemed

the familiar shores of one's native land! There were greetings to be exchanged, notes to be compared on the experiences of the night, absorbing interests connected with the arrival of the steamer alongside the quay and—joy of joys—the sight of the yellow wheels of the conveyance which was to carry us on the last thirty miles of our journey. This was nothing more nor less than a long car, a kind of vehicle unknown except in Ireland, and, in sober truth, nothing more luxurious than a species of spring dray with wooden flaps over the wheels and a kind of knife-board arrangement on which four or six people sat facing outwards on either side, the luggage being piled in the middle. But the fiery chariot of Elijah could not have seemed to us a more delectable and luxurious and splendid conveyance.

And now we were all packed and tucked in behind rugs and aprons, and rattling over the stony streets of the town and out into the country road, with the morning sunshine slanting still low across it, and the air still sweet from the dews and showers of the night, and the hedgerows fragrant and bright with wild roses and dog-daisies. We had thirty miles to cover, with changes of horses three times, and the joy of the road before us. The first thing I remember when once well out on the road was the production of baskets and packets of biscuits and sandwiches; and my strongest

association with this part of the road is the slightly metallic taste of milk drunk out of the cup of a flask, and the difficulty of imbibing it from the narrow end of the cup while seated on a jolting vehicle. And after that I think I generally slept or dozed for about an hour; dozed deliciously, leaning against some protecting shoulder, with an under-current of the gritty sound of wheels along the road, of the horses' hoofs, of Irish voices heard in pauses by the roadside. Then, refreshed by sleep, one would wake to an absorbed interest in the affairs of the journey; for our vehicle carried the mails for thirty miles, and carried many other things as well; so that the driver, as we rounded a bend of the road, would suddenly throw a fish at the door of a house, and give a bundle of newspapers to some old woman who had walked a couple of miles down a side road to receive them. At one corner there was always a dog, a black retriever, who waited for his master's newspaper, and could be seen soberly trotting off with it until the bend of the road hid him from sight. Then there was a beggar who frequented the road, Jimmy Leary, of whom we were terrified, and the sight of him stumping along in his picturesque tatters, or pausing, as we passed, to raise his lined face and shake his knarled stick at us, thrilled us with a sense of perils encountered. Then there were the halts to change horses, and the sight of

men drinking porter in some little wayside public-house; and my views of life at that time must have been very strict, for I remember feeling rather frightened that in such a happy country, and on such a beautiful morning, men should be found wicked and abandoned enough to commit this sin.

Halfway along the road, just after it passes through the town of Newtownards, takes a sudden bend and comes out on one of the most fragrant shores in the world. One moment you are under trees, going by a moss-grown chapel and market-house, and the next you are out in the open with the stony beach close to you, the intoxicating smell of seaweed, and the sound of waves washing against stones—no muddy lake water, but the veritable sea itself, clear and green and transparent against the rocks and pebbles of the beach. Need I tell you what the moment of that vision meant to us in this succession of delights? For these were our own waters, the shores of our own lough, which we were to follow in all their twistings and turnings for some fifteen miles, and well-nigh to the open sea itself. Great was the competition to sit on the shore side of the car; so great indeed that turns had to be taken, and at stopping-places there was much lifting down and hoisting up as these exchanges were effected.

Two more changes of horses after this, and we were out on the last ten miles, mostly inland again,

for we were to lose sight of the sea until it burst upon us at the very doors of our home. Now the excitement became almost sickening as we strained our eyes along the road to mark the familiar objects; and as we neared the village of our destination familiar faces began to appear on the road, and we recognised them with a thrill of wonder that they should exist so unchanged during our absence. Now began the long wall of the demesne, with a curtseying figure at the first lodge gate; and at the end of the wall, under a tunnel of trees, the pump and the first white cottages of the long village street. The horses were whipped up, and with a glorious commotion we entered on the last stage of our triumphal progress. The upper halves of the house doors were opened, and old women with mutches on their heads looked out upon us, shading their eyes with their hands. Now we have passed the baker's, that functionary himself, perpetually white, and living, as it were, in a mist of flour, standing behind his counter; now past the wonderful shop of sweets and mysteries, with the name 'Anderson' in crusted white letters (one of them missing) over the lintel; now another shop, the source of the most delicious gingerbread, with its little proprietress nodding and waving to us from the door; now, with a last crack of the whip and scattering of poultry from under the very wheels, into the market square

itself, in front of the post-office, with familiar faces waiting to greet us. But even yet we had not finished; the greater joy was to come. The mails have been taken off, the parcels and odd luggage discharged, and with a grating of brakes we turn away down the steep street, where the masts of ships show over the roofs of houses, round the corner, beside the pump, along the wall of an old castle, and suddenly the view is open—to me the most sacred and beautiful view in the world; a view of beach and harbour and sea, with our own craft at her moorings in the foreground, and the swift sliding tide beyond, and across it green wooded shores trimmed with a brown line of seaweed, and the blue mountains in the distance. That was the culmination; but a few yards more and the wheels had come to rest, and we jumped down on to the gravel sweep into the arms waiting to receive us. Yet it was not the beloved kinsfolk whose presence and welcome most thrilled us, but the sturdy, bearded, blue-jerseyed figure, commodore and admiral of our small fleet of boats, who stood waiting to take part in the welcome, and, incidentally, to help with the luggage. That he should be really alive and existing before us in the very flesh was the crowning miracle and delight of our journey. When we had found him we had Arrived.

Going Away and Arriving—how closely the

whole of existence fits itself between those two adventures! When you stand in the mid-sea of life, far away from its beginnings, and apparently far from its ending, you realise how many things you have gone away from, and how comparatively few you seem to have arrived at. Yet I like to think that they are but the two halves of one whole, and that if Going Away is the chief joy of youthful life, Arriving is the special pleasure and privilege of age; and that even though the horizons of youth are grown dim and misty in the distance, for people who have grown old wisely the land they are approaching grows more and more clearly defined, and from being a strange and unknown, becomes a familiar and welcoming country; on whose soft shore they look forward to lying down for a long rest, with the noise of the waters over which they have passed lulling them to a pleasant and dreamless sleep.

ABSENT FRIENDS

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THAT is a good custom by which men and women, met together for any glad or solemn festivity, when they have duly toasted themselves and each other, commemorate the absent in one generous and inclusive cup. It is towards the close of things that our thoughts turn to them—at the end of the week at sea, at the end of a feast, at those gatherings, half convivial, half pathetic, that mark the close of the year, and on all such occasions when our hearts are full; for although life and experience teach us that our friends do not always like one another, and that some of them, equally dear to us, are better apart, yet there is in every generous soul a purely human instinct to bring every one and everything he cares for together within the circle of his love. And so we lift our glasses, and with a mingling of pleasant and sad thoughts, memories, and regrets, murmur 'Absent Friends.'

There are so many of them; and he has either very few friends, or is singularly fortunate in the presence of many, for whom the absent are not in

the majority. And there are many kinds of absent friends. There are those who are always absent when they are most needed, to whom one does not think of turning in the tight places, who are present, like all other agreeable superfluities, only when the road is smooth and the sun is shining; and who are destined to be absent, not only from you and me, but from every one, all through life, who might really have need of their friendship. They are the people who 'never mix themselves up' with anything difficult, who 'never take sides,' who 'never interfere'—in a word, who avoid all centres of trouble, and so miss the only places in life where treasures and sweet things may certainly be found. Poor friends, absent from life itself!

And there are others who, if they are absent, are never friends, or, if they are friends, are seldom absent. They are the shallow souls to whom only what is actually present is real, whose friends are always their next-door neighbours in life, who are intimate with their partners at dinner, and bosom friends of a season in town. What is beyond their sight or touch is beyond their feeling. They are the 'I meant it when I said it' brigade, who may mean the direct opposite a week afterwards. They are often lovable, amusing, and agreeable; they do no good at all, and very little harm; we will remember them in our toast, although they assuredly will not remember us. How little we

miss them compared with those truly and terribly absent ones whom life, and not death or time, has sundered from us ; with whom we once walked as familiar souls, sharing life and breath, and with whom we shall never walk more. Yet even from these, although gulfs impassable divide us, we are often less far off than we think ; their very absence takes the sting from their and our offences ; the sad things fade from memory, while the joys remain ever green. When the laughter is going round, and we seem most absorbed in the moment, the absent are often most near to us, seen and communed with in those mysterious, detached and radiant chambers of the mind where, as in a shrine, we keep what we love best. But the contrast between the radiance within and, perhaps, the gloom without, is painful and disturbing ; it is thus that deep natures are often most lonely in a crowd, because they are neither part of it nor wholly detached from it, but stand midway between the absent and the present, at home with neither, but distracted by both. For absent friends cannot always be invoked, even in the spirit. Sometimes our affections fly like birds from one to another, and find nowhere to alight ; sometimes they come back, bearing some reassuring olive leaf ; and sometimes and happily they find lodging and refreshment in the wilderness, and come back to us no more.

And there is that other company of the absent—those who, in the familiar yet mysterious figurative expression, have passed beyond the veil that divides us from those who live no longer in time and space—that veil which seems sometimes to have the substance of steel, and sometimes of mere gossamer that a breath or a prayer can agitate, and which nevertheless is more impenetrable than a thousand stone walls. It is one of the faults of a certain kind of religion that, in dwelling on the realities of another world and another life, it has for many people magnified and made more terrible the physical fact of death. In such a conception, while there is a possibility of ultimate reunion, there is the certainty of complete separation in the present. Need it really be so complete? Death may be, in the Arabian phrase, the Destroyer of Delights and Sunderer of Companies, but it certainly is not necessarily the divider of friends. The fact of death may be strangely small, as you can realise for yourself. You have a friend in the Antipodes; he dies; and three weeks later you get the news, and begin to sorrow. But for three weeks he has been dead, and, just because no one told you, you felt no loss or grief; you still thought of him and loved him and possessed him in your heart. The day and hour of his death made no impression on you. Only when the post came you suddenly felt that you had lost him.

And if there had been no post, and no one had ever told you, you might have gone on for the rest of your life in the seeure possession of him. Absent in the body he would always have been, but that was true from the moment he sailed, and death added nothing to it. The idea of him, which is all we ever possess of those who are physically absent, was yours equally before and after the little moment of death.

And are not our friends who are absent in this sense peculiarly our own? Death stops the development of friendship, but it also stops its decay. It does not end, it fixes friendship. What your relationship was on the day your friend left you, it remains as long as you live, unalterable by any human frailty or failure, and beyond the reach of any evil chance. You have seen life divide friend from friend, and the lover from the beloved, but never death; life is stronger than love, and may destroy it, but love is stronger than death. No one who really loves life can entirely hate death, which is a part of it; and thus even when it is most terrible we may cheer ourselves by thinking of it not as the thief but as the warden of our treasures.

One very obvious lesson we might learn from our absent friends, yet we never do quite learn it —and that is to remember those who are still present. It is absurdly simple, yet the whole

root of the matter lies there. We have only a little time in which to love and value them; and if we could but use every moment, save and fulfil the flying opportunities, be always and entirely kind, then at the toast of 'Absent Friends' we might drain our glasses, and find there no drop or taste of bitterness.

BEGINNING AGAIN

BEGINNING AGAIN

THE first fortnight of January is the great Monday morning of the year, when, after the pause and disorganisation of Christmas and the annual tidying-up of various temporal matters, we settle down into our normal routine, and Begin Again. During the fortnight before Christmas it has not been worth while to begin anything; we are hypnotised by the shopkeepers into the idea that the only suitable occupation of those weeks is feverish buying, and between Christmas and the New Year we are often in a state of exhaustion or reaction, wondering what the fuss was really about. But there comes a day when the excitement, real or artificial, of the season is over, and the reaction also; when we look out of the window some foggy morning at the blank, grey winter sky, and realise that no exciting event is likely to happen in our world for some time: that, in fact, there is nothing left to do but to Begin Again. To people who live a normal and quiet life it is the dullest and least inspiring of moments. There are, perhaps, no great successes to be repeated, or no great failures

to be redeemed, no triumphal or sorrowful way to be retraced—nothing but just to Begin Again the ordinary and unexciting round of life. It is the Monday morning outlook intensified, with its perspective extended into the dimness of the unknown year. It is a curious moment, and, like every moment of our lives, worth examining and savouring before we pass on and leave it behind.

I suppose that the people to whom Beginning Again is most formidable are the successful people. To the man whose career is a sequence of great and triumphant achievements, the most difficult moment must surely be that when, after the successful issue of a great endeavour, he must Begin Again. He must deliberately begin to do something at least as great and successful as he has done before —probably something greater, for there is no such thing as really level progress; if the road is level the burden becomes greater, or if the burden grows lighter the road becomes steeper. The man who writes or produces a successful play every year must feel, when he Begins Again, that not only the success of his next play, but the successs and justification of his whole life depends on this new beginning. The statesman who has distinguished himself in one office must feel, when he Begins Again in another, that he must distinguish himself still more; for if he does not advance, people will

say that he is failing. The financier who has just successfully launched some vast scheme must immediately Begin Again on something vaster. No doubt all these successful people would like, after their great triumph, to work at something small and easy, which would be a rest from their strenuous exertions; but that is not the rule of life. The burden and penalty of success is more and more success. If your income has been four thousand a year, and it falls to two thousand, you will be regarded as one who is going back in worldly prosperity, although there may have been a time when two thousand a year would have represented riches and success to you. But if your career be that of making money you must Begin Again to make the four thousand five, and the five thousand six; and consequently, as you grow older, Beginning Again becomes a more and more formidable thing.

Perhaps the only person who really loves Beginning Again is the incorrigible failure. To him these recurring moments are really sunny and agreeable. For the man who addresses himself with gusto to such occupations as Turning Over a New Leaf, Making a Fresh Start, or Cleaning the Slate, Beginning Again can have no terrors. It is the one moment in which the man who always fails has a bright vision of success; he almost hastens through the later stages of his previous failure,

almost welcomes disaster, so that he may engage in the inspiring business of Beginning Again. Such a man frequently talks about Cutting his Losses. Indeed, he makes haste to cut them sometimes before he is quite sure whether they need be regarded as losses or not. Such a man, it need not be said, would also cut his winnings if they went on too long, for the simple reason that either losses or winnings, until they are cut, stand as a mark on what would otherwise be a clean slate, and sully the fairness of what would otherwise be a new leaf. Cut them he must before he can indulge in the luxury of Beginning Again. Such people think that there is virtue in actual beginnings, not realising that the real virtue lies neither in beginning nor in ending, but in continuing, which is the most difficult and important thing for men to do. There is excitement about beginnings and endings, but there is no essential virtue in them. There is such a thing as beginning wrong. The clean slate and the new leaf may be great snares; and it might have been better to struggle along on the old sheet, confused as it may have been with mistakes and crossings-out, and even blotted with tears, in the hope of writing some brave word at the end. But it is always easier to Begin Again on a new sheet, even although we know in our hearts that it will never be completed, but in its turn merely soiled and forsaken for a clean successor. There is

apparently no age which is free from the illusion of Beginning Again, and beginning wrong. Even China has in these latter days taken it into her head to Begin Again, and, in the opinion of Europeans most competent to judge, to begin wrong. The idea that a governing body can be formed which will be representative of four hundred millions of the most undemocratic people in the world, or, indeed, representative of anything but itself, would be strange enough even without the experience of other Republics which, to clear-seeing eyes, have already sufficiently demonstrated the doubtfulness of that form of Government. But there is an epidemic at present in the world of Beginning Again—an epidemic of Clean Sweeps and New Régimes which, like the housemaid's matutinal labours, raise a great deal of dust that generally settles comfortably down again when the sweeping is over. What has France written on her new page ? And what will Portugal write, comparable with what France and Portugal wrote on the old pages ? A beginning which involves a break with tradition seems for nations to be almost always a wrong beginning ; and the Englishman who loves his country and who looks back into her history, will pray that England, at any rate, will be spared the disaster of Beginning Again.

But we have drifted into great matters which are somewhat beyond the scope of this little essay. It

is probable that you and I, reader, are not concerned with any of these great considerations; that we have neither dazzling triumphs nor inevitable failures to record; but when, as at this time we Begin Again, we simply take up the ordinary life of ordinary mortals in this world—a life of plain duties, and some joys I hope, and certainly many cares; in a word, we take up the burden again. I do not like that imagery which always shows the carrier of a burden as staggering and bending beneath it, bent almost double to the ground, and groaning and complaining of his task. There are many ways of carrying burdens, and if we make up our minds that they have certainly to be carried, the only respectable method is to carry them with a good grace. The women of India are trained from their earliest years to carry heavy weights on their heads, with the result that they have a bearing and carriage of incomparable grace, so that it is a delight to see them walk. Burdens may thus be made ornamental, interesting, and even amusing. We can contrive all manner of knots for the better securing of them; we can invent means of distributing them about our persons so that one part does not feel the whole strain; for some men carry their burdens almost entirely on their heads, and other almost entirely in their stomachs. We can arrange the load so that it presses more evenly everywhere; so that the head

relieves the heart, and the shoulders take what share they can. When we Begin Again thus to carry our burdens, instead of bewailing them, it is worth while to study this question of distribution and see if, in fact, they cannot actually be made to improve our bearing through life. For the rest, we may surely take the advice that Good-will gave to Christian in Bunyan's allegory: 'He told him, as to his burden, to be content to bear it, until he came to the Place of Deliverance; and there it would fall from his back of itself.'

THE END

NOTE

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F. Y.

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